Palmtop

The journal for today's Psion user

Issue 16 Bimonthly

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The journal for today's Psion user

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Submissions

Any contributions of material published within the pages of *PALMTOP* (excluding 'On The Net') will earn the author a minimum of one free issue added to their subscription. If you wish to write feature articles for the magazine then please contact the editor to discuss your ideas.

Back Issues

All issues are available at £4 each in the UK, £4.50 in Europe, and £5.50 elsewhere. All prices include postage. Just send payment in the usual way, stating which issues you require.

Subscriptions

PALMTOP is available by subscription only from the address given above, price £24 within the UK, £27 in Europe and £33 worldwide. Price covers 6 issues and all postage (and airmail costs for European/worldwide subscriptions). VAT is not payable on *PALMTOP*.

Payment for subscriptions or back issues can be made by cheque or Money Order (payable to *'PALMTOP PUBLICATIONS'*) in UK FUNDS ONLY. Payments can also be made using VISA, MASTERCARD, AMERICAN EXPRESS, EUROCARD, DELTA, JCB, ACCESS and SWITCH cards. Please call, fax, post or e-mail your card details.

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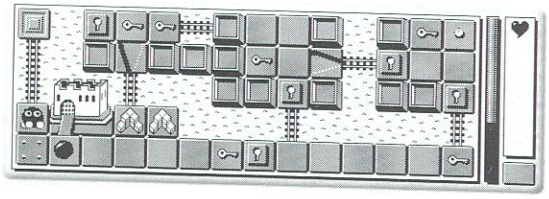

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Editorial

Many people seem to be so impressed with the cleverness of 'modern computers' that they may be led to believe that the technology is mature, reliable and generally fabulous. Non-computer users in particular may think that everything works automatically at the touch of a button, and that the drudgery of doing your daily business 'by hand' is left solely for those who have not yet discovered the wonders of computing.

Those of us who have had their 'trial by fire' with computers know better, sad to say. We all have our own little stories of the time our document just *refused* to print, the time those database records wouldn't import properly, the WORD document wouldn't format the way you wanted it, you couldn't get the spreadsheet looking the way you had intended, and countless other frustrations.

It is sometimes difficult for us computer users to admit that all is not rosy in the garden of bytes. Non-computer users always seem so awed by the ingenuity of it all that we hate to burst their bubble by confessing that things don't always work 'as advertised'. The other reason is probably that we don't want to destroy the image of computers as a great productivity enhancer, which helps to justify all the money we've spent on them. There's nothing worse than having someone find out how much money you spent on that "funny calculator thing", and then having your cost-justifying demonstration collapse around your ears because things don't work as smoothly as they ought, after spending "all that money".

Many times the limitations are due to our own incomplete knowledge of the hardware and software—we just aren't proficient enough operators, but there are also times when the hardware is faulty, the software is buggy or poorly designed, or the system has otherwise managed to tie itself in knots.

Those who use nothing but their Psion computer should count themselves lucky. Any desktop computer is far more intricate in terms of software features, hardware complexity, peripherals—everything. For every time you have a head-scratching moment with your Psion you can bet that the corresponding PC user has at least *ten* similar experiences.

This choice of editorial was sparked by my recent attempts to connect an Ericsson GS18 mobile telephone to a Psion. I don't mean the physical connection—the cabling is the work of mere seconds—but my efforts to

persuade this lash-up to communicate with an Internet service provider have so far been fruitless. All the setting-up *should* be relatively straightforward and there are only a limited number of options to be set, but nevertheless success has thus far eluded me. In frustration I contacted a couple of other seasoned Psion users with GS18s—neither of them had managed to connect either.

The moral of this story is that computers are still too hard to use. I'm certainly no communications expert, but I have a basic understanding of the main principles involved, and feel that life really ought to be easier than this. Perhaps in five or ten years time we'll truly be able to forget about the underlying technology behind our gadgets and just get on with using them. Until then at least some of those great productivity gains we ought to be getting from all this clever technology will be partially stymied by the too-complex reality.

Harking back in time by fifteen years, computing life was much harder still: software was still in its infancy, slow, unfriendly and usually required the user to memorise a whole host of arcane commands just to perform the simplest of tasks. Thankfully we can envisage a time when things will be significantly easier than now, but that's still some way off. In ten years time I expect to smirk in disbelief that setting up a mobile Internet connection was ever this tedious. For now we have to accept that computing is still not a truly mature technology. We just grit our teeth, dig out the manuals, cables and soldering iron, and resign ourselves to being unwilling pioneers of the computer age.

Steve Clack - February 1998

Palmtop is...

Steve Clack - Publishing Editor

Pete Sipple - Contributing Editor

Steve Litchfield - Contributing Editor

Leigh Edwards - Technical Consultant

Rosemary Rolfe - Distribution Manager

Thanks... to all the contributors whose names appear within the magazine, particularly Stephen Murgan and Rick Andrews for their regular contributions. Thanks also to all those who have kindly supplied their products for evaluation.

I'm happy to announce that from this issue onwards Steve Litchfield has joined Pete and I as part of the main editorial team. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Steve in his new 'official' capacity, and I'm sure that *Palmtop* will grow even stronger with the benefit of Steve's unique mix of skills and experience in the Psion world.

Steve Clack

Palmtop News

The latest hot gossip on what's happening in the Psion world

Still no Quicken

Series 5 users awaiting the release of the Quicken personal finance package will have to wait a little longer. At the time of going to press the software is still being beta tested, and the full release version is not expected until March/April. We will be giving the product an exhaustive test in the next issue of *Palmtop*, together with all the shareware bank account management packages currently available.

New PsiWin plug-in

A new PsiWin plug-in is now available to give Series 5 file compatibility with Microsoft Office 97's Word 8 and Excel 8. Series 5 AGENDA entries can also be synchronised with Microsoft Outlook's Calendar and Task folders. Available free from Psion's web site and on the new *Palmtop* CD-ROM (see page 9 for details).

www.psion.com

PsiWin 2.1 on the way

Following the recent release of PsiWin 2.01 for the Series 5, a more significant update, version 2.1, is due for release in February/March. It will be available as a free download from Psion's web site.

The new version will support stand-alone conversion between Psion and PC formats without a Psion being connected, improved support for the latest Microsoft file formats and better handling of documents with embedded objects.

And a new Message Suite too...

Version 1.1 of the Series 5 Message Suite should be available by the time you read this. It has an enhanced interface with 16 greyscales instead of the previous four, and includes a number of bug fixes. Available free from Psion's web site.

Psion Software development to start in Japan

Psion have reached an agreement with Japanese software house Kanri Kogaku Kenkyusho Co Ltd. (K3) to develop EPOC32 software for Japanese consumer electronics manufacturers.

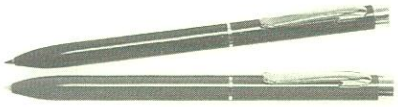
Psion Software and K3 have been working in close collaboration to produce a best-in-class Japanese Front End Processor (FEP). The FEP is a tool that converts phonetic text input on a western style keyboard and delivers Japanese text in mixed Kanji, Katakana and Hiragana. K3's FEP runs on Psion Software's EPOC32 and is the first real-time intelligent FEP specifically designed for palmtop computers, smartphones and communicators. K3's FEP engine will allow for the full use of Japanese in all EPOC applications.

Further Asian language variants of EPOC32 are scheduled for later release.

Widget stylus pens

Those tired of the standard Series 5 pen supplied by Psion may wish to look at Widget software's new combined pen/stylus. Rotating the barrel switches between a stylus tip and a conventional ballpoint pen. The stylus pens are available in black or burgundy, both with gold trim, and are priced at £14.95 each.

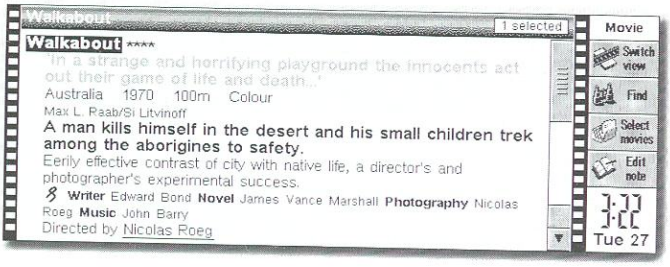
Contact: Widget Software
Tel: 01438 815444



Rhino cases from USA

Rhinoskin, a palmtop computer case manufacturer based in Wyoming, USA, have recently announced their *Rhino Pak* cordura cases for the Series 3a/3c and Series 5. The cases feature zipped closures, belt loops and a cushioned interior, together with additional storage pockets for pens, credit cards and batteries. The cases are priced at US$49.95 each. We will feature a full review in the next issue of *Palmtop*.

Contact: Rhinoskin
Fax: +1 307 734 8868


Walkabout
1 selected
Movie
Walkabout ****
'In a strange and horrifying playground the innocents act out their game of life and death...'
Australia 1970 100m Colour
Max L. Raab/Si Litvinoff
A man kills himself in the desert and his small children trek among the aborigines to safety.
Eerily effective contrast of city with native life, a director's and photographer's experimental success.
Writer Edward Bond Novel James Vance Marshall Photography Nicolas Roeg Music John Barry
Directed by Nicolas Roeg
Switch view
Find
Select movies
Edit note
Tue 27

A complete movie guide on your Series 5, the new *Halliwell's Film & Video Guide* from Palmtop BV

Series 5 screen protector

Also available from Widget Software, the new *WrightRight Screen Enhancer* is a specially engineered plastic film that fits directly over the screen and is designed to reduce glare, protect from scratches and simulate the feel of writing on paper...

The film is available in packs of 12 sheets for £19.95. We haven't tried out the *WrightRight Screen Enhancer* as yet, but will include a review in issue 17.

Contact: Widget Software
Tel: 01438 815444

Series 5 film guide due

Palmtop BV will shortly be releasing a Series 5 version of Halliwell's Film & Video Guide. The sophisticated database contains details of almost 50,000 movies, actors, directors, etc., and allows notes to be added to each entry. We will be featuring a full review in issue 17.

New Psion car adaptor

Allgon Lovelock Limited (UK) has just announced the release of their UK-manufactured in-car power cord for the Series 5. The curly-cord cigar lighter powered device is suitable for all 12 volt operated vehicles and conforms to current E.M.C. regulations. The cord is priced at £29.95 plus VAT and postage.

Contact: Allgon Lovelock Ltd
Tel: 01235 811119

Psion goes GroupWise

Novell and Psion have joined forces to bring *GroupWise* groupware features to the Psion range. *LinkWise*, developed by Advansys Corporation, is a synchronisation tool that enables Psion users to reconcile their GroupWise schedule with their Psion Series 5, Series 3a/3c and Siena.

A 30-day trial version of the current release of LinkWise is available for download from the Advansys website at www.advansyscorp.com

Palmtop Software Directory expanded

Palmtop's Software Directory has been extensively expanded and updated since the last issue, and now features more than twice as many software entries as before. As well as appearing in the back of every issue of the magazine, the directory is kept more regularly updated on our own www site.

www.palmtop.co.uk

MC Box 3 delays

Exportech have recently notified us that the first samples of the MC Box 3 Series 3a/3c PC card adaptor/interface will be shipped to them sometime in February. The launch of this product was delayed by several months because of technical problems, last minute modifications and improvements.

Information on pricing will be available by the time you read this issue of *Palmtop*. We hope to be doing a full review in the next issue.

Contact: Exportech
Tel: 0181 682 3313

Online Software Catalogue

An online version of Psion's new *Software and Accessories Catalogue* is now featured on their www site. The information is also available in an offline version on the new *Palmtop* CD (see below for details).

Palmtop CD released

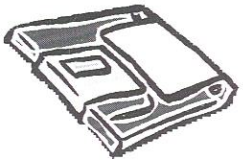
The first edition of the *Palmtop* CD is now available. The CD-ROM will be shipped to everyone who has subscribed or resubscribed to the magazine since 1st December 1997. Readers please note that the CD will be updated and re-pressed at least every three months, and is intended to be an ongoing offer for the foreseeable future. Those who wish to receive the CD early can opt to take out an advance resubscription to the magazine.

The CD is mastered in a hybrid format, so will be readable by any computer that accepts PC-style CDs, and in native format on Apple Macintoshes.

The CD contains more than 2000 pieces of shareware and freeware (the *entire* 3Lib library), plus valuable reference data in the form of FAQs and online documents, including the full *Palmtop* and 3Lib web sites. Also included are the latest versions (at the time of going to press) of PsiWin and the Messaging Suite, Psion Siena and 3a emulators for the PC, a Psion screen saver, plus information on major Psion suppliers and more.

Shareware Shorts

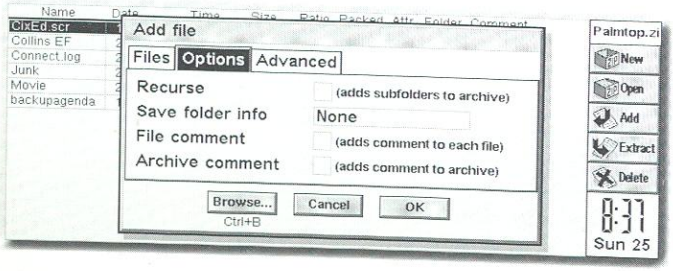
Steve Litchfield takes a look at the latest additions to the world of Psion Shareware...



As I've recently taken over responsibility for maintaining *Palmtop*'s Software Directory (both in the magazine and on the web site), I'll now be looking after the Shareware Shorts section too.

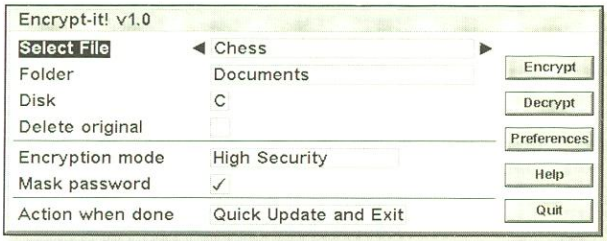
Firstly, I hope you'll forgive a slight change in style I'd like to make. Rather than list the ZIP file names for each program, I'll give the author's own name instead. The reasons for the change are firstly that shareware programs are often frequently updated, with corresponding ZIP name changes, and secondly that most people tend to go looking for shareware 'online'. In this case the author's name is the most useful search clue as you can go straight to his or her web page.

On with this issue's selection of the very latest and best in Psion freeware and shareware. The relative paucity in software that's compatible with the Siena, 3a and 3c continues, with most new programs appearing for EPOC/32 and the Series 5. It's worth noting, though, that over 2000 applications have already been written for the 16 bit



Full ZIPping and unZIPping facilities on your Series 5—PsiZip

Psions, making it a very mature platform and one for which it's relatively difficult to think up new ideas.



The change to the '5' has given authors a chance to rethink their interfaces and generally use a lot more imagination, and should be seen as a good thing.

Zip it up!

First up, and by far the most important shareware release in the last year, is the Series 5 version of *PsiZip*. As before, the author is **Serge Shestopalov**, though the program's name is possibly going to change as Serge rethinks the way he handles shareware payments to his home in Latvia. The utility offers full zipping and unzipping of standard ZIP archives. The biggest application of this is to allow *Message Suite* users to download and unzip files while away from a desktop machine.

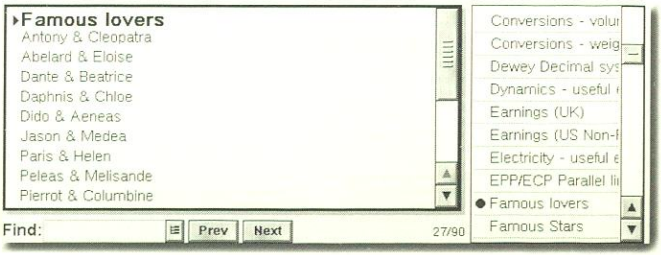
Encryption for the S5

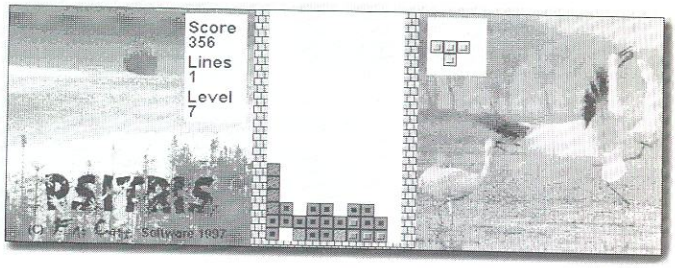
In line with the Five's aspiration to be taken seriously in a business environment, **Peter Csutora** has programmed *Encrypt-it!* Armed with a stronger algorithm than the one used by Psion for WORD, SHEET and the 'power-on' password, this is an encryption utility that will scramble and password protect any Psion Series 5 file. A quick update feature automatically launches the file's associated application immediately after decryption and also ensures encryption again when the file is closed down.

'Five' file utilities

A name long familiar to Psion users is **Roger Muggleton**, and three more small freeware utilities have surfaced from his prolific hand. *3T* is a file manager with

Trivia on your Psion 5





Yet another variant of Tetris, this time on the Series 5

better functionality than the Series 5 system screen. *Font Viewer* is a programmer's tool showing the effect of different font and mode commands. Lastly and best of all, *Quick Viewer* is a file browser, automatically showing the contents of text, OPL and bitmap files as you browse through the Series 5 folder structure. If a file type is not displayable the raw hexadecimal is shown, which at least gives an idea of what it contains. As each file is browsed it can also be deleted, making *Quick Viewer* the ideal tool for reclaiming space on your precious memory disks.

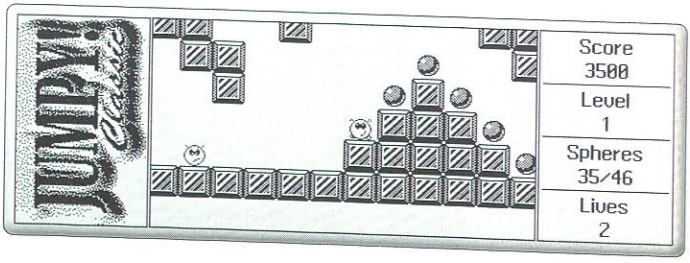
If all these tiny utilities leave you confused, **Paul Law** has a solution with his *Desktop Utilities Plus*. This combines most of the functionality of many of the other Series 5 programs into the one 'shell'.

My own *Trivia* program is a huge freeware collection of 'useless' information, all accessed using the Series 5 DATA application. There are entries for things like the Seven Wonders of the World, or The Periodic Table. Fun to browse and invaluable for cheating in pub quizzes!

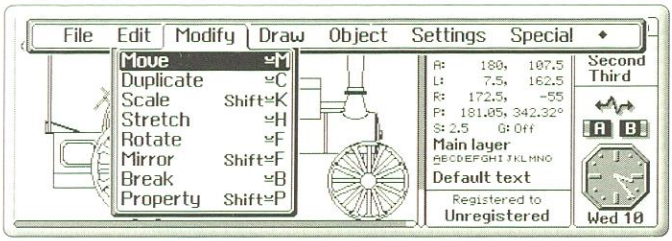
Drop the blocks...

PsiTris is a new Tetris game for the '5'. Although not as frenetic as *Atomic* (mentioned last issue), it looks good, is very configurable and totally free. The author is the enigmatically named **FatCatz**.

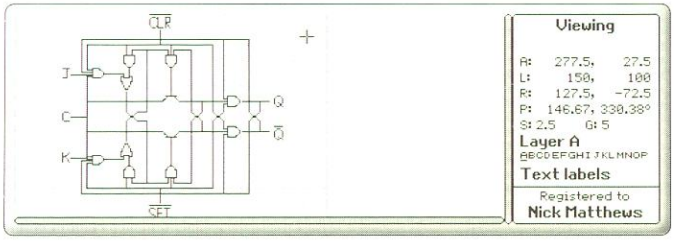
Aaahh! is a strangely named Series 5 production from the equally strange **NRG**, but the game itself is rather neat. It's a configurable tile puzzle and comes with a selection of suitable backgrounds. The best bit is that you can use



An all-time Series 3 classic—Jumpy. Now for the 3a/3c



Vector, by Nick Matthews. CAD on a 3a/3c!



More amazing sophistication from Vector

your own scanned-in pictures; re-arranging your boss's face has never been so much fun!

Two extra packages are now available for the '5' to give you more options on managing your finances. **Daniel Pfund's** *DPBank* and **Malcolm Bryant's** *ABP*.

New versions of existing Series 5 software include **Andy Clarkson**'s *Plan*, **Alan Richey**'s *S5Bank* and **Stefan Smith**'s *UK Pocket Directory*.

3a/3c goodies

On the 3a/3c front, **Rick Andrews'** *Draw* is under new management. Rick's off to pastures new, and support is being taken up by myself. I've been a fan of *Draw* for a long time and hopefully can keep up the user support at the same excellent level that Rick managed. *Draw* is fully working shareware.

Vector, by **Nick Matthews** is a full 3a/3c CAD package, with vector drawing capabilities rivalling PC packages. Multiple layers and object grouping point towards tremendous power.

Last but not least, one of the classics of yesteryear has just been released in new livery. **Jon Read's** *Jumpy*, the legendary platform game is now available for the Series 3a/3c.

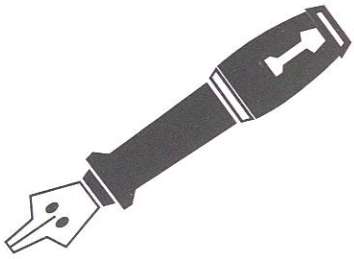
If you have any troubles finding any of the software mentioned here, please note that it can *all* be found on the *Palmtop* magazine web site: *www.palmtop.co.uk*

Get ALL the shareware featured in this issue on floppy disk - see page 111

Readers' Letters

Contribute and WIN PRIZES!

The Prize Letter in each issue wins the author a FREE software package or other Psion goodies from our special collection. Prizes are valued at up to £70 each!



Death of the Series 3?

I have a Series 3a, and now that everyone wants a Series 5 I am getting worried about the software for the Series 3. Will the Series 5 totally kill all the other Psion computers? Will Psion only be interested in software for the Series 5, and not bother making anything new for the Series 3 range?

Matthew Brooke-Hitching
Kintbury, Berkshire

Psion are still manufacturing the Series 3c and Siena machines, and as far as we understand there are no plans to drop either from their product range for the foreseeable future. It's important to view the Series 5 as just another part of the expanding range of Psion computers, not a direct replacement for everything else.

As far as software is concerned, it's a fact that very little new commercial software is being produced for the Series 3a/3c/Siena. This is understandable, as new Series 5s are selling faster than any other Psion machine, and it simply makes more commercial sense for companies to write software for that platform. Also, the 3a/3c software market is pretty mature now, and most users would agree that there's already an excellent range of programs for the 3a/3c, so there really aren't any major gaps to be filled.

The shareware scene is a different matter. There is still a steady (if slowing) stream of shareware programs being released for the 3a/3c (see Shareware Shorts for evidence of this), and it'll probably be many months before this

dries up completely. Even at that stage the 3a/3c user will still have an arsenal of literally *thousands* of programs at their disposal, so there's really no reason for despair. Many computer platforms (especially handheld ones) *never* accumulate even a small fraction of the support and popularity enjoyed by the Series 3 range, so there's every reason for satisfied users to keep their machines and be happy.

Coverage of the 3a/3c within *Palmtop* will certainly continue over the coming months, with several articles in the magazine being relevant to both '3' and '5' users, and some still dedicated completely to the Series 3 range. The number of new product reviews is entirely governed by what is available, and if any significant new Series 3 products appear then we will certainly include them in the magazine - Ed.

Geofox joy

As a Psion user of many years, starting with the LZ64, then the Series 3 and now the Series 5, I was naturally interested in the Geofox One when it was launched a few months ago.

I was so tempted by the specification that I took the plunge and bought a 16MB Geofox, on the basis that buyers can return it for a full refund within 14 days of purchase if dissatisfied.

I backed up my Psion 5 to my PC immediately the Geofox was delivered, and restored my data and programs to the Geofox using the supplied 'EPOC connect' software and cable.

All the standard Psion software works perfectly, making full use of the much bigger screen. Most of my other software works well, but only in a Psion 5-sized window. This is still much clearer than on the Psion however, and I am sure software authors will soon make the small change required to fully use the extra screen size of the Geofox.

Not only is the screen larger, but it is also much clearer than the Psion 5's, and you feel as though you are working on a 'notebook' rather than a 'palmtop'. I don't miss the touch sensitive screen, which although a much faster selection method than the 'Glidepoint' mouse still has its own problems—like the poor contrast and highly reflective screen.

I found the 'Glidepoint' on the Geofox similar in use to those supplied on notebook computers, and very intuitive.

I quickly adjusted to the keyboard, but the position of some keys and the legends on the application hotkeys are rather bizarre. Despite this it is still a better keyboard than on any comparable machine I've tried, apart from the Series 5, which reigns supreme for touch typing. The Geofox application hotkeys are a big improvement over the Series 5, as is the numeric keypad. Also, the stability of the Geofox is very good for all screen positions provided that it is used on a flat surface.

The Geofox is larger than the Series 5 but it will still fit in a jacket pocket, just like a slim paperback, though I generally prefer to keep it in a leather case.

I am still very much a Psion supporter, for both their hardware and software innovation, but for my money the Geofox One with 16MB of RAM, a three year warranty, extra software, larger and clearer screen, a good keyboard and a lower price is a clear winner.

Chris Mennie
Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire

A happy customer

I am sure that you frequently receive complaints about Psion suppliers and distributors. It is all too easy to be moved in anger to give vent in print to negative feelings about a bad experience. Rarely does anyone trouble to commend a supplier for a job well done. I know it does not make for good news or good copy to write about a good experience, but I had recent dealings with Exportech, one of your advertisers, and have to say that I have rarely met a supplier with such a commitment to high quality customer service and support. It was a situation in which a technical problem occurred and Exportech did not rest until it was solved. All of this was done with humour, persistence, courtesy and patience.

They solved the problem, provided me with the equipment that I actually needed and credited me with the material that I did not. I cannot speak highly enough of them.

I can recommend them to any Psion purchaser, and to your readers as a professional supplier who stand by their products and deliver excellent customer service.

I hope that you might publish this letter as excellence deserves its reward in print equally as much as failure.

James Brennan

In defence of Allegro

Purple Software works extremely hard to produce the highest quality commercial software applications on the market. Your review of our Allegro handwriting recognition software (*Palmtop* issue 15), whilst acknowledging "all the wizardry", concentrated on the value of the application only in relation to its alternative, i.e. keyboard input.

I agree, Allegro does offer customers a direct alternative to the keyboard. This in itself is welcomed by many users, who are not competent touch-typists, (nor boast small, nimble enough fingers!) However, the application really comes into its own in a host of situations, where keyboard entry is not convenient, for example:

- Where the handheld is used in a standing situation (and touch typing is difficult)

- Where the handheld is more generally held at an awkward angle (on one's lap or another surface)
- In poor lighting, when you cannot read the legends on the keys
- Where slight mechanical keyboard noise is unacceptable

Handwriting recognition software is already well-established as an input mechanism on other handheld platforms, and I would particularly draw your attention to the success of the PalmPilot. Allegro offers customers a choice, and Purple Software would be failing users if it were not creating a whole host of applications which add value to these wonderful handheld devices.

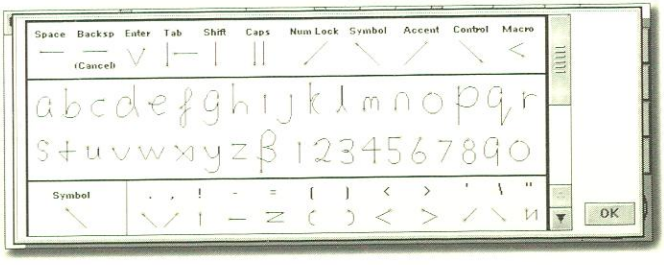
Alison Bell
Purple Software Marketing Executive

Our review praised Allegro as a clever and technically elegant piece of software, but summarised by stating that for the vast majority of Series 5 users *any* kind of character recognition software is simply an irrelevance.

Comments on the success of the USR PalmPilot bear no relevance to the suitability of that technology on a dissimilar machine (the Series 5) armed with unquestionably the best palmtop keyboard on the market.

We take our product tests very seriously here at *Palmtop*, and we obtained our 'words per minute' benchmarks from someone who had never used a Series 5 before, and who was typing standing up, using only two thumbs. We simply can't agree that there is *any* possible position, no matter how awkward, that favours character recognition over keyboard input. Also, the tapping and scraping across the screen from entering Allegro gestures is really no quieter than the Series 5's modest keyboard noise.

I agree that using the Series 5 in complete darkness is one area where Allegro scores over a keyboard, but this is hardly commonplace, and few users will wish to pay £50 for a utility that only improves their productivity when using their Series 5 in the dark - Ed.



Purple Software's Allegro—how useful is it on the Series 5?

A Closer Look...

...at some of the newest and most interesting products available for your Series 3a/3c, Series 5 and Siena

Pages Generator

Series 3a/3c

In the right hands, Mobile Software's *Pages Generator* could save a company an awful lot of time and effort. In the wrong hands, it could do the opposite. Such are the extreme opinions that spring to mind after using it for a few days. Monopoly this ain't.

Most people will have already seen Mobile Software's consumer products (including my favourite, Nicholson London Pages), in which very large databases of facts and figures were compressed and shipped with a special 'Pages Viewer', running on Psion 3a or 3c machines. You won't be surprised to learn that Pages Generator is the software system that builds the special files required. I use the word 'system' on purpose, for this is no single application but a fairly complex set of batch files, utilities and example files, and at its core is a suite of programs running on Psion's freeware Series 3a emulator.

Although the software installs onto a PC painlessly enough, the documentation is all supplied electronically in HTML format and has to be viewed in a browser under Windows. This is a major pity, as the Pages Generator software only runs in the 3a emulator under 'raw' DOS. The only sensible thing to do is to print off all the instruction pages under Windows and make your own 'manual'. Considering the price of this product and its heavyweight intentions, I think a friendly paper manual would help enormously and give a better first impression than a simple white plastic box containing three floppy disks and a piece of paper. Once printed off, the documentation is good, though slightly

2. Index ...	Indexing Complete

Database contains 30 records
13 menu items being indexed ..

Running Pages Generator

Your database has been indexed successfully.
Use the Optimise option, to optimise the index

over-condensed at only a mere 20 pages.

To back up the documentation Mobile Software supply example databases to help accelerate the learning process. Pages Generator is aimed very much at businesses, where large data sets (usually in PC formats) rule the day, and where the possibility of carrying the same data on company palmtops will be a major boon (witness the large Prudential deal they announced in the last issue of *Palmtop*).

The actual database generation process involves preparing tab or comma-delimited files in Mobile Software's own special field format, running a DOS batch file to package the data into Psion 'DBF' form and then entering the 3a emulator to run the Pages Generator core program, which then builds the final compressed files. The product comes with a single-user license for Pages Viewer, which then allows the files to be viewed on a real Psion. Most companies will purchase multiple licenses depending on the number of operatives they equip with the software.

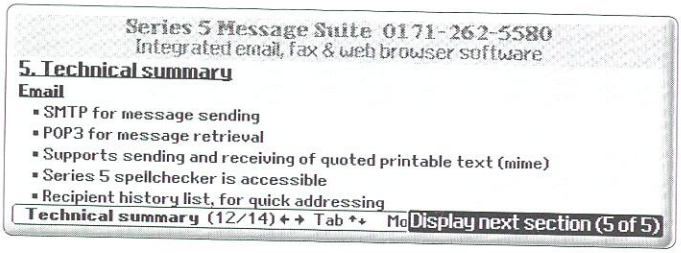
There are plenty of informational messages along the way, plus good context-sensitive help screens, and although you certainly wouldn't call the system *simple* to use, it's by no means inpenetratable either. Mobile Software try hard to make up for the spartan initial product with quite outstanding telephone and email support, even extending to the provision of special seminars if required.

Having used Pages Generator to convert my database (in this case a sub-set of the Psion Software catalogue), it turns out there are three interfaces for Pages Viewer that my staff or I can choose from. The 'Power' interface is the one most of us have seen from Mobile Software in the past, and involves construction of database queries using 'point and shoot' techniques. The 'Simple' interface just allows basic name searches on any of the database fields. And my favourite, the 'Dialog' interface, presents everything in the form of multiple-choice questions—a system which lends itself extremely well to being used in a sales or advice envi-

Modify Global Parameters

·Initial user interface	←Dialog→
·Summary screen presentation	Standard
·Search criteria columns?	One

Configuring the Viewer system


Series 5 Message Suite 0171-262-5580
Integrated email, fax & web browser software
5. Technical summary
Email
• SMTP for message sending
• POP3 for message retrieval
• Supports sending and receiving of quoted printable text (mime)
• Series 5 spellchecker is accessible
• Recipient history list, for quick addressing
Technical summary (12/14) Tab
Display next section (5 of 5)

A real-world database (of Psion products) running within Mobile Pages

ronment. Recent improvements in the software have made embedded tables and other 'rich text' effects possible, using a proprietary mark-up language.

Despite the effort needed to get your company's data into the Mobile Pages file formats the rewards can be impressive. The compression ratios achieved obviously depend on the type of data fed in. For example, you'd get no benefit at all from giving Pages Generator your address book, whilst a well-structured company product database, fully categorised and sorted, might yield fourfold (or more) compression. The search speed of the Pages Viewer is quite astonishing, performing complicated queries on a 10,000 record database in about *two seconds* flat.

Also impressive is the option to use industry-standard ZIP files to store all or part of your databases, with the Mobile Pages system intelligently working out whether it needs to extract each bit of the data, and doing so automatically if required. There is a three second speed penalty per entry when doing things this way, but if space is very tight it might just save the day.

Any company with more than one Series 3a/3c and large amounts of data would do well to try Pages Generator. The authors are so confident of their product that they've released a fully-functional (but limited to 200 records) version on their web site (*www.mobilepages.com*), and this is an excellent way to get started in generating your own 'Pages'.

Steve Litchfield

Pages Generator

From: Widget Software

Availability: now

Contact: £99.95

Runs on: Series 3a/3c

Supplied on: floppy disk

Price: £99.95 including VAT

Rating:

Portable Chef

Series 5

I confess to having quite a penchant for recipe books, being an enthusiastic if nowadays not-so-frequent cook, and my partner and I have a combined collection of well over 200 assorted cookbooks covering a wide variety of cuisines.

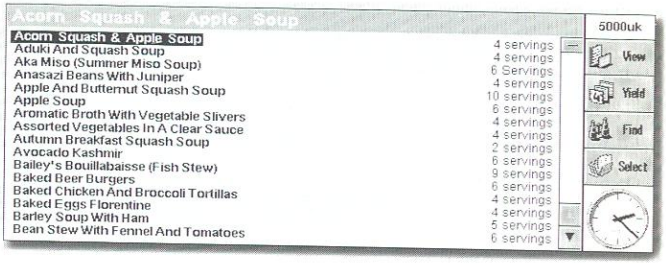
Browsing through cookery books can be an engrossing pastime, particularly when the books contain mouthwatering photos of the dishes too. As much as I enjoy our cookbook collection I sometimes struggle to find the recipe for a particular dish I last cooked five years ago and want to cook again, or to look up all the recipes that would neatly utilise those leftovers I have in the fridge. The answer for any computer buff would of course be to index all the recipes into a single Psion database—but wait a minute—taking a realistic average of at least 500 index entries per book, it would come to more than 100,000 entries. That's about *six months* of solid work at the most conservative estimate!

Portable Chef is an attempt to provide exactly the searching and cross referencing capabilities that a conventional book collection lacks. Discounting the inevitable lack of photographs to embellish the content, how good is this text-only collection of recipes? Well, as with most of Palmtop BV's Series 5 software to date, Portable Chef is supplied on a single CD-ROM disk. The CD uses a custom installation program that runs under Windows 95, and it is from there that you select which of almost 10,000 recipes you want to install onto your Psion.

The recipes are divided into groups. You can choose to install a basic selection of either 1250, 2500 or 5000 recipes, and/or a colossal selection of a few thousand bread recipes (yes, a few thousand), a similar quantity of vegetarian dishes, plus hundreds of others under the categories of diabetic, vegan, cocktails and beverages.

If you want to install everything you'll need to have called your local CompactFlash dealer first, as the whole thing takes more than nine megabytes of space. The recipes can be loaded in English, German or Swedish, though the program menus and dialogs can only be set into English or German.

The recipes themselves come from a variety of sources and vary enormously in both quality and writing style. The overall variety across the 5000 'general' recipes is good though not exhaustive, with everything from apple pie to duck webs in oyster sauce. Much of the attraction of a computerised recipe book is the ability to search for items of a particular cuisine or containing particular ingredients. As a few examples I found 35 Greek recipes, 143 Italian, 54 Thai, 324 under the 'soup' category, 1401 containing eggs, 163 beef dishes, 364 containing beef as an ingredient,

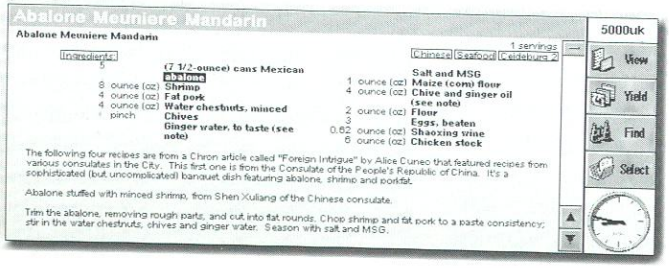

Acorn Squash & Apple Soup
5000uk
Acorn Squash & Apple Soup 4 servings
Aduki And Squash Soup 4 servings
Aka Miso (Summer Miso Soup) 6 Servings
Anasazi Beans With Juniper 4 servings
Apple And Butternut Squash Soup 10 servings
Apple Soup 6 servings
Aromatic Broth With Vegetable Slivers 4 servings
Assorted Vegetables In A Clear Sauce 4 servings
Autumn Breakfast Squash Soup 2 servings
Avocado Kashmir 6 servings
Bailey's Bouillabaisse (Fish Stew) 9 servings
Baked Beer Burgers 6 servings
Baked Chicken And Broccoli Tortillas 4 servings
Baked Eggs Florentine 4 servings
Barley Soup With Ham 5 servings
Bean Stew With Fennel And Tomatoes 6 servings
View
Yield
Find
Select

Browsing the main 5000 recipe database

246 with the word 'beef' somewhere in the title and so on. Most cuisines have at least a little coverage, with small numbers under such categories as Japanese, Polish, Russian, Swiss, Malaysian, Brazilian, etc.

A major benefit of Portable Chef is in finding recipes containing a number of specific ingredients. Using this feature you can soon rustle up a dish containing whatever you happen to have lying around the house—something that would be next to impossible with conventional cookbooks. The search engine used to perform such searches is adequate, but not perfect. To find all recipes containing beef, ginger and mushrooms it's necessary to search once for the first ingredient, then search the found subset again to find the second item, then again for the third, and so on. It would have been so much easier to allow multiple search criteria in a single operation.

Also, although you can search on numerous keywords and categories, there is no summary list of these categories, nor a multiple-choice dialog box from which to select them. You simply have to guess the keywords, so if looking for English cuisine you would find nothing under the 'English' keyword, but 7 matches under 'British'. If you search for 'soup' it will find 324 items, but this category is actually 'soups and stews', so it'll also bring up a whole lot of unwanted items too. The necessity for this kind of guesswork makes the searching process harder than it ought to be, and mars an otherwise immensely useful facility.


Abalone Meuniere Mandarin
5000uk
Abalone Meuniere Mandarin
1 servings
Ingredients
Chinese Seafood Celebrities ?
5 (7 1/2-ounce) cans Mexican Abalone
8 ounce (oz) Shrimp
4 ounce (oz) Fat pork
4 ounce (oz) Water chestnuts, minced
1 pinch Chives
Ginger water, to taste (see note)
Salt and MSG
1 ounce (oz) Maize (corn) flour
4 ounce (oz) Chive and ginger oil (see note)
2 ounce (oz) Flour
3 Eggs, beaten
0.62 ounce (oz) Shaoxing wine
6 ounce (oz) Chicken stock
The following four recipes are from a Chron article called "Foreign Intrigue" by Alice Cuneo that featured recipes from various consulates in the City. This first one is from the Consulate of the People's Republic of China. It's a sophisticated (but uncomplicated) banquet dish featuring abalone, shrimp and pork fat.
Abalone stuffed with minced shrimp, from Shen Xuliang of the Chinese consulate.
Trim the abalone, removing rough parts, and cut into flat rounds. Chop shrimp and fat pork to a paste consistency; stir in the water chestnuts, chives and ginger water. Season with salt and MSG.
View
Yield
Find
Select

Recipe details, showing ingredients, instructions and category information

A neat 'Shopping list' feature lets you move the cursor to any ingredient listed in a recipe and press a hotkey to automatically add it to a shopping list which can be viewed on screen or printed. You can also add items to the list manually, so you don't have to be doing all your cooking from Portable Chef for it to be useful.

The biggest downfall of Portable chef for non-US users is the fact that almost all of the recipes are Americanised. That is to say that ingredients are measured in pounds (lb), tablespoons, cup measures, etc., spring onions are called *green* onions, coriander is cilantro, cornflour is cornstarch, etc. Also oven temperatures are in Fahrenheit rather than Celsius, and certain of the ingredients are uniquely American, such as 'buttermilk biscuit mix'. The program cleverly allows adjustment of ingredient quantities to vary the number of servings, but won't adjust from Imperial measures to metric, so non-US users may find the recipes hard to follow. The American style also extends to kitchen terminology, so you'll need to know that a 'skillet' actually refers to a frying pan!

If you're comfortable with the terminology and the lack of consistency in style across this gargantuan mish-mash of recipes then you'll probably get a lot of use out of Portable Chef. It's safer to pick out and print your recipes *before* getting into the kitchen—just to avoid getting cooking oil and crushed garlic all over your precious keyboard.

Steve Clack

Portable Chef

From: All major Psion dealers

Availability: February 1998

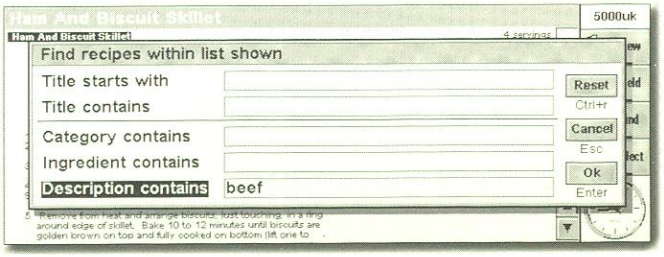
Contact: n/a

Runs on: Series 5/Geofox One

Supplied on: CD-ROM

Price: TBA

Rating:



The 'find' menu, which allows searching on several categories

Sound Master

Series 5

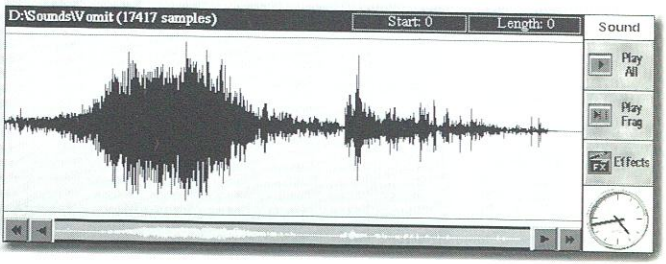
As enjoyable as 'leisure' software may be, one has to look at the Psion scene from time to time and ask a few pertinent questions. Six months after the Series 5's release we already have more games than you can shake a stick at, and now Sound Master to allow you to record your dog's bark played backwards (with reverb and vibrato) as a wake up call, but still no serious database, no flexible file management tools, no mail merging program, and others—all serious business tools that any computer worth its salt really ought to have.

While the major software houses (Psion included) funnel their efforts into endless short-term money spinning playthings, all too many *serious* applications essential to the long-term success of the EPOC platform remain unwritten. Sound Master is the epitome of this folly, and despite the inevitable fun factor, such a program is of no serious benefit to anyone but a programmer, for whom the ability to create sound effects may actually be useful, at least for someone who does games programming.

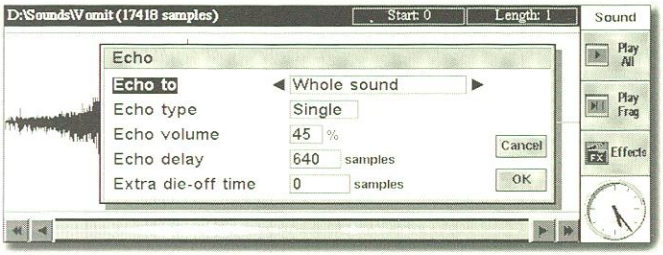
Sound Master has many similarities to the Series 3a/3c product of the same name (reviewed in issue 3), but with more sophistication. The basic brief of the program is to manipulate any sound recorded with a Series 5, or from Sound Master's pre-recorded 1MB library of more than 70 'clips'. These include elephants trumpeting, breaking glass, gunshots, the first few bars of Beethoven's 5th, and the most horribly graphic sound of someone vomiting on the ground. Something for everyone.

The manipulation can be as simple as altering the playback speed of the sound, reversing its direction, or editing out unwanted parts. It can also involve special effects such as vibrato, echo, mixing with other sound files to create composite effects (like an elephant trumpeting with a gunshot in the background), fade in/fade out and more. Some of the effects can be configured, and most can be set to operate only on selected parts of a file.

All this flexibility is a lot of fun (at least for the first 20 minutes), but Series 5

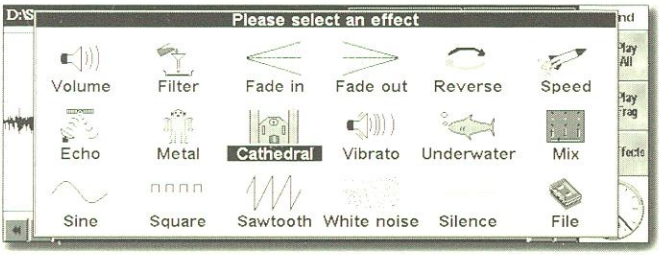


Sound Master displaying the waveform of a sound sample, ready for tweaking



Applying an echo effect to a sound sample. Lots of configuration options to play with

The main effects menu. 18 fun effects to impress your friends...



sound output is hardly high fidelity, so ultimately you can't do anything much more than use your creative results as alarm sounds. Sound Master will import Series 3 sound files and import or export Windows WAV files, so if you're really determined you can use your handiwork for PC alert sounds too, though frankly I can't see why anyone would want to go to the trouble.

Overall, Sound Master is a well engineered program that's good at the job it was designed for, and if you *really* want to play with sound effects on your Series 5 then you could barely wish for a more competent means to do so.

Ultimately, unless you're a budding programmer you'll find Sound Master's appeal severely limited as most people will lose interest in manipulating household sounds within a matter of a few hours.

Steve Clack

Sound Master

From: All major Psion dealers

Availability: February 1998

Contact: n/a

Runs on: Series 5/Geofox One

Supplied on: CD-ROM

Price: TBA

Rating:

Collins Dictionaries

Series 5

I admit that my review of Berlitz Phrasebook in *Palmtop* issue 15 was fairly dismissive, concluding that most people would be better served by a smattering of real learning rather than a dependence on the Series 5.

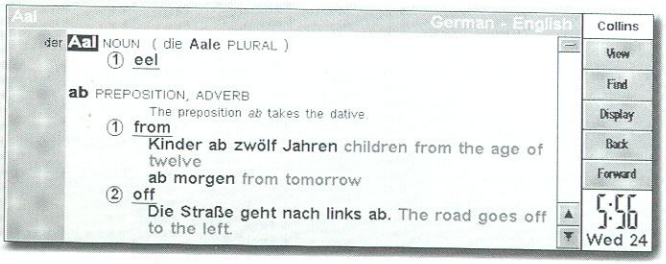
These new electronic versions of *Collins' Easy Learning dictionary* are available in English-French or English-German versions. They are exactly what's needed if, like me, you have the basics of the French or German languages in your head, but quickly start doing lots of hand-waving in real life situations. The applications work well both to and from the target languages and their 7,500 word vocabularies are sufficient for all but the most obscure circumstances.

Using the example from the aforementioned Berlitz review, where I'd been stranded in France after two wheels had been stolen from my van, the appropriate Collins dictionary gave "une roue" for 'wheel' and "une camionnette" for 'van', with "voler" being the verb for 'steal'. Even with limited French knowledge it would then have been quite simple to link the three words in an intelligible fashion.

The second problem example, that of ordering a low alcohol beer, is also capably handled, with "non alcoolisée" being a good way to describe the type of "bière blonde" that I want.

The main screens of the English-French and English-German dictionaries are styled to resemble the paper dictionaries they replace, though I found that the over-use of grey coloured text by default sometimes presented words that were hard to read without adjusting the machine's screen contrast level. The discovery that translated text may also be shown in a normal black font made things a lot easier. The Five's touch screen is well utilised for selection of individual words or to operate the toolbar functions. Once selected, individual words can be copied to the clipboard for use in a document.

There are three quite innovative features in the package (by *Palmtop BV*):



The main dictionary screen

Avoiding drinking and driving in France!

Firstly there's the clever quick-finding system which 'decides' when you're typing letters in a word to be matched, and when you're starting a new word again from scratch. The aim is to save you having to either type the whole word in, press <Enter> at the end, or clear the previous search. It works well for almost all of the time and saves you ever having to think about the interface—you just type what you're looking for and up it comes on screen. I especially liked the way the <Tab> key switches languages, meaning that quick-searching in English, German or French is only ever a keypress away.

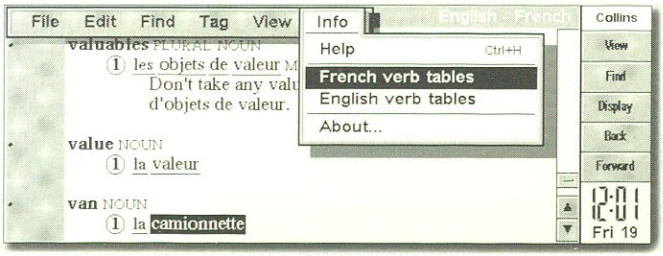
Secondly, there's the way that almost every word on screen is a hyperlink to itself elsewhere in the dictionary. In this way, it's easy to follow a chain of related words forwards and backwards.

Thirdly, accents and composite characters (é, æ, ß and so forth) are handled elegantly by the simple technique of 'parsing' all words down to the basic 26 letter English alphabet, and again this works well and is a big time saver.

There's also a built-in dictionary outliner with three levels of detail, making location of a particular word easy even when you're not completely sure how to spell it.

When learning a foreign language it's often useful to revise particular groups of words or phrases. Both dictionaries allow tagging of words for recall later on, though there's no facility to save a particular set of tags for re-use, which is a pity.

Remembering verbs is often a big problem, and tables of the six most



Verb tables? This beats memorising them all...

common tenses for some of the different regular and irregular types are included in a separate program section. While still very welcome, it would have been nice to see this feature better integrated into the main dictionary, perhaps by using more hyperlinks.

An anagram and crossword solver complete a couple of extremely professional and useful reference applications. Even if you only look up something a couple of times a week they're still well worth the asking price.

Daniel Madden

Collins Dictionaries

From: All major Psion dealers

Availability: now

Contact: n/a

Runs on: Series 5/Geofox One

Supplied on: CD-ROM

Price: £39.95 including VAT

Rating:

Financial Calculator

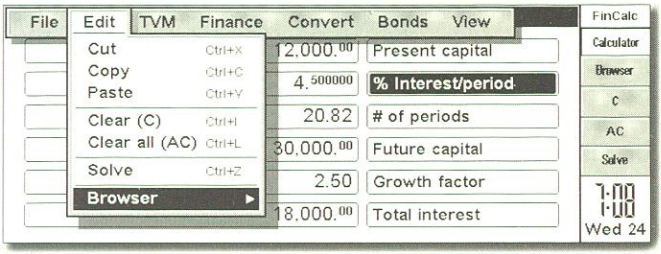
Series 5

Regular readers of *Palmtop* will know that I'm a big fan of doing as much as possible with the built-in applications, rather than resorting to expensive third party programs. A tool like the Series 5 SHEET is so powerful that the likes of Financial Calculator shouldn't really be necessary.

Although this is true if you're an experienced spreadsheet user, in which case you'll be hand coding worksheets to calculate things like depreciation in next to no time, there will be many people who lack either the knowledge, confidence or time to accomplish the task. And it is of course these people who Financial Calculator is aimed at. All the formulae are pre-programmed in, and accessed through an easy to use interface. There's nothing unexpected there, but what there is has been slickly put together.

Financial Calculator's full list of features is as follows:

- Cashflow analysis
- Capital growth
- Break-even point
- Compound depreciation
- Uniform series
- Actuarial functions



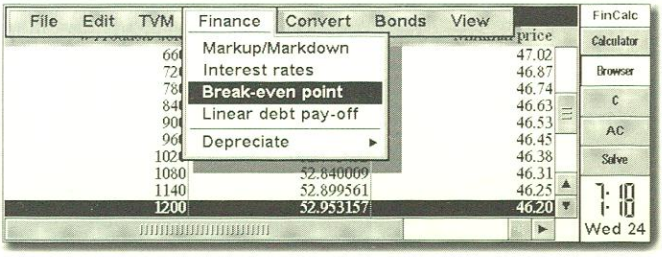
The 'Calculator' interface

- Mark-up/mark-down
- Interest rates
- Break-even points
- Linear debt pay-off

Each calculation is represented to some extent in both of the program's two modes. 'Calculator' is where starting values and parameters can be entered and single-valued results read off instantly. 'Browser' is a scrollable table representing the behaviour of your numbers over the course of months or years. Not every type of data can be shown appropriately in both modes, but Financial Calculator has a darned good try.

Although the formulae involved aren't hugely complicated, some decent documentation is certainly needed here. The built-in help is very disappointing, amounting to two screens of text at most, but the A5 paper manual does a fairly good job of saving the day with 40 pages of explanations and worked examples. It reads rather like a school textbook in places, but financial calculations aren't the sort of thing you do for fun and I for one appreciated the detail. I just wish it could be mirrored in the online help as well.

Rather curiously, the authors have thrown in a stack of extra unit conversion functions, though what relevance temperature, energy, length and power have to financial calculations is beyond me. There's even a 'days between two dates' function, which despite being a most useful feature hardly belongs in a suite of financial tools. Of more use is



Working in the 'Browser'

the 'User conversion' facility, which can be used for general purpose conversions such as currency exchange rates.

There are the usual *Palmtop BV* touches, such as full zooming facilities, a toolbar that can be put either on the left or right side of the screen, and strict adherence to the Series 5 application guidelines. There's also an excellent printing section, complete with preview of how your tabular data will finally appear in hard copy, though I would have liked more control of the formatting here.

This is a well-constructed time saver for business people, though personally I would rather work through the numbers in a spreadsheet, somehow feeling I'd be more in control of exactly what was happening to my precious numbers.

Steve Litchfield

Financial Calculator

From: All major Psion dealers

Availability: now

Contact: n/a

Runs on: Series 5/Geofox One

Supplied on: floppy disk

Price: £49.95 including VAT

Rating:

Leisure Pack

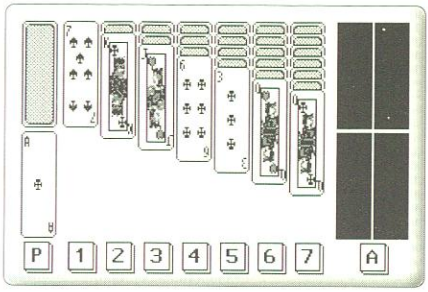
Series 3a/3c/5 and Siena

Since the introduction of the Series 5 there's been a lot of game recycling going on. Software companies have been taking games that were successful for them on the Series 3, and reworking them for the '5'. Psion have done it with three of the games in *Games Arcade*, and Purple Software have done it with three of the games in their *5Pack*.

The basic premise is reasonable enough: if a game was well received on the Series 3 then there's no reason why it shouldn't do well on the new machine too. Widget Software have gone one further and tried to make Leisure Pack (which includes five titles from their *Games 3a* pack, as reviewed back in issue 2) into a universal games compendium, in that all but one of the games have versions that run on the Series 3a/3c, Series 5 *and* the Siena.

Solo

Simply the traditional 'Klondike' patience (solitaire) game. The Series 5 version adds the option to drag cards across the screen with the pen if you prefer this to keyboard control. Despite this I found the S5 version less playable than the Series 3 equivalent, because the smaller cards were a little awkward to read. The Siena version of this game is an abomination (see screenshot on next page)—Widget have simply



allowed the Series 3 screen to be squashed into half its normal width in order to fit everything in. This results in horribly ugly 'narrow' cards which are hard to read.

Poker

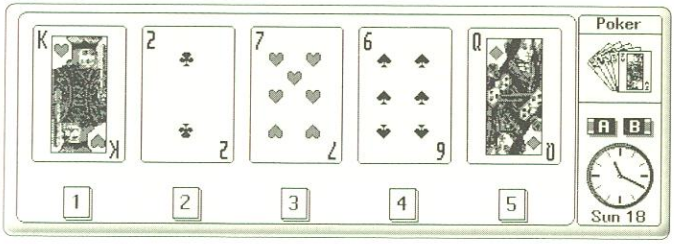
The popular card gambling game. The Series 5 version works well and benefits from the larger screen, and unlike with Solo the cards are large enough to be easily readable. Again the Siena version is quite unacceptable, with everything distorted on the Siena's half-width screen.

Castle

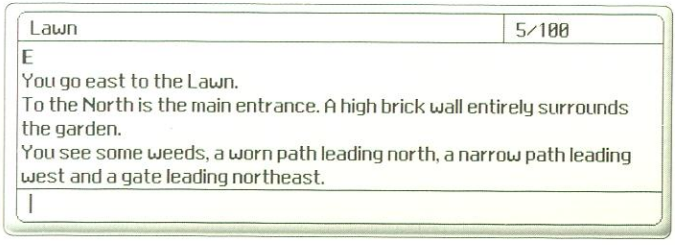
A simple text-based adventure game. As it involves no graphics, Castle plays equally well on Series 3a/3c, Siena or Series 5. It doesn't have the detail or depth of plot you'll find in the excellent 'Lost Treasures of Infocom' series (reviewed in issue 5), but is an enjoyable game nevertheless.

Tetrion/Palmtris

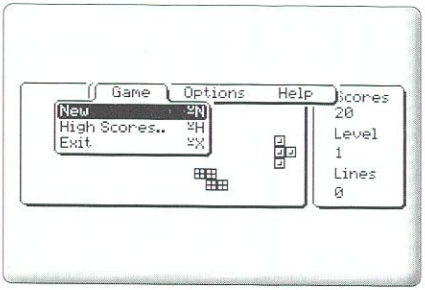
These are versions of Tetris, the excellent and ever-popular arcade game. Tetrion runs on the 3a/3c and Siena, but was actually written for the 240 x 80 pixel screen of the original Series 3 'Classic'.



Poker running on a 3a/3c


Lawn
5/100
E
You go east to the Lawn.
To the North is the main entrance. A high brick wall entirely surrounds the garden.
You see some weeds, a worn path leading north, a narrow path leading west and a gate leading northeast.

Castle on a 3a/3c. An entertaining text adventure



Tetrion shown running on a Siena. A tiny window in a tiny screen...

This makes the graphics horribly coarse and unattractive on the 3a/3c, and forces Tetrion to run in a half-height 'window' on the Siena. Everything thus appears far too tiny, and you almost need a magnifying glass in order to play it.

The Series 5 version, Palmtris, is a completely different variant of the game, this time written by Palmtop BV in the Netherlands. This is the gem of the entire games pack, and the best implementation of Tetris I have seen running on a Psion. The animation is smooth, the game is very configurable, and the sound effects are unusually entertaining.

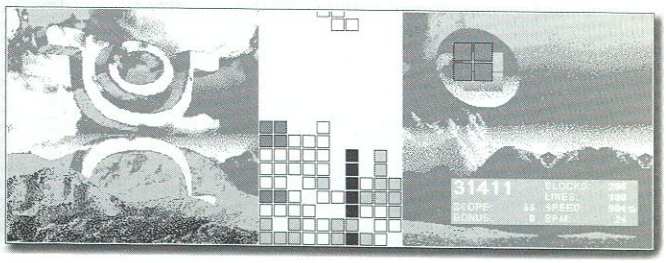
The 'board' only takes up the middle 20-30% of the screen, but the pieces are only simple shapes, so they're perfectly legible. The playing area can be configured to expand and contract a little depending upon how many rows of pieces are on screen, which helps to maximise the play area at all times.

Reversi

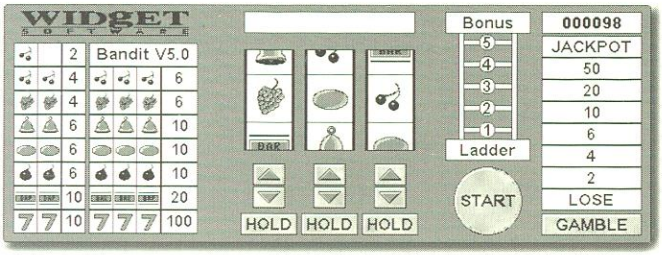
Also known as Othello, the popular board game. The new S5 variant is easier to play, as you can tap the screen to place your pieces, but overall this is less attractive and less configurable than the version included with Purple Software's 5Pack. Together with Castle and Bandit this is the only game that works acceptably well on the Siena, with the square board fitting nicely into the almost-square screen.

Bandit

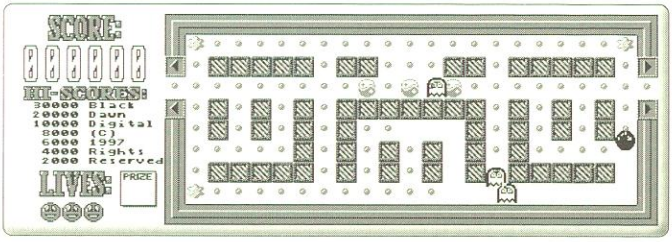
A pure gambling game—a one-armed-bandit for your Psion. Quite entertaining on even the Siena version, the S5 update sports animated nudging, and you can actually tap the 'hold' and 'nudge'



The excellent *Palmtris* on a Series 5



Bandit on the 5. Gamble away, but with nothing to win or lose



Pac-Man revisited—Chomper on the 3a/3c

buttons, just like the real thing. This is fun, but probably of less lasting value than the other games.

'compatible', and three of them are so poor as to be virtually unplayable.

Steve Clack

Chomper

The Series 3a/3c version of this Pac-Man look alike was reviewed in issue 14. There's no Siena version of this game, which is understandable given the amount of graphic detail needed for the playing area. There is very little difference between the S3 and S5 variants, apart from a little more in the sound effects department. Overall a fairly good implementation of the arcade classic.

Overall Leisure Pack is fairly good value for Series 3a/3c users, but apart from Palmtris the games are a little weak on the Series 5. The authors have done a shoddy job in making the games Siena

Leisure Pack

From: Widget Software and other major Psion dealers

Availability: now

Contact: Widget Software Ltd
Tel: 01438 815444

Runs on: 3a/3c/Siena/Series 5

Supplied on: floppy disk

Price: £39.95 including VAT

3a/3c rating:

S5 rating:

Siena rating:

Psion 5 In Easy Steps

Series 5

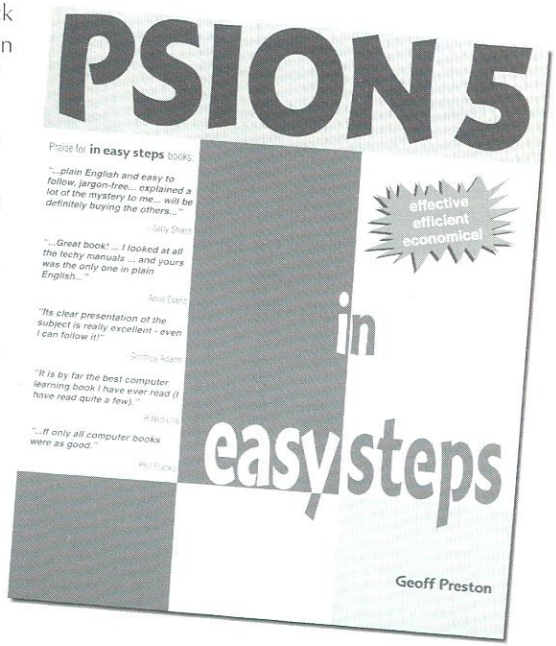
I've lost count of the number of times I've bemoaned the lack of good third-party Psion-related books. Personally I always found the Series 3a/3c manuals quite acceptable, if a little dry and lacking in worked examples. The Siena manual started a new trait with Psion though, one of providing rather brief documentation and leaving the task of detailed manuals to third parties.

The bad news was that no such third party (or parties) materialised, so Siena and Series 5 users have thus far been without definitive, detailed manuals. The Widget quick reference Guides (reviewed in issue 14) fill quite a few of the gaps for the 3a/3c and Siena, but Series 5 users have had to rely on the built-in help system for more in-depth instructions than those provided in the slim S5 manual.

The 190 page 'Psion 5 in Easy Steps' isn't the answer to every Series 5 owner's dreams, but for the complete or relative novice it is a most useful volume.

The front cover of the book does an injustice to the interior—it lists a number of testimonials for the 'In Easy Steps' series of books, but they are not specific to this particular book, which seems a little misleading.

The 12 chapters of the book cover raw basics such as 'Why use a Psion?' and 'Getting started', through to the other rudiments such as printing, memory management (which also discusses PsiWin 2 and CF disks), and each of the built-in applications taken in turn. Some other welcome inclusions are a chapter on communications (including faxing), connecting a GPS receiver and using it with appropriate mapping software, and a chapter on third-party programs, including a short section on software installation.


PSION 5
Praise for in easy steps books
"...plain English and easy to follow, jargon-free... explained a lot of the mystery to me... will be definitely buying the others..."
"...Great book! ... I looked at all the techy manuals ... and yours was the only one in plain English..."
"Its clear presentation of the subject is really excellent - even I can follow it!"
"It is by far the best computer learning book I have ever read (I have read quite a few)."
"...If only all computer books were as good."
effective efficient economical
in
easy steps
Geoff Preston

The content of the book is well spaced and attractively presented, with everything arranged in an admirably easy-to-read format. It makes ample use of screenshots, graphical icons and clear headings, which help to keep the text approachable for novices. The relatively large typeface and open, non-cluttered spacing does reduce the amount of 'meat' in the book though, and as a result the whole 190 pages contain only around two thirds the amount of text you'll find in a single issue of *Palmtop*.

The quality of the book is consistently good, it's clearly written and easy to follow, and thankfully devoid of the poor grammar and spelling mistakes that seem to have plagued other Psion-related texts in the past. It's constructed in a more friendly, informal style than Psion's own Series 5 user guide, and as a result is more enjoyable to read.

The level of detail in the book is quite consistent: almost always similar to the Psion user guide, but also better explained for the novice. Some tutorial examples are given to help illustrate basic principles, though I sometimes felt that they could have gone into more depth.

The relatively brief text will leave many readers craving more, and it is its lack of *real* depth that must be the book's biggest criticism. Still, it makes no claims to be an exhaustive reference, and besides, beginners can be frightened off by huge thick volumes. At a very reasonable £8.99, 'Easy Steps' is a welcome addition to the small list of Psion-related books. It is well pitched for the market it was intended and is good enough that I'd like to see a 'Psion 5 in depth' sequel from the same author.

If you have already gained a good grasp of your Series 5 then you probably don't need this book. If you are relatively (or completely) new to the Psion or to computers in general, or you simply found the user guide too much to plod through, then 'Psion 5 in Easy Steps' is a far more palatable introduction and you should have an excellent grounding in Series 5 lore at the end of it.

Steve Clack

...In Easy Steps

From: Major book shops

Availability: now

ISBN: 1-874029-87-3

Contact: Computer Step
tel: 01926 817999

Designed for: Series 5

Price: £8.99

Rating:

The Holy Bible

Series 5

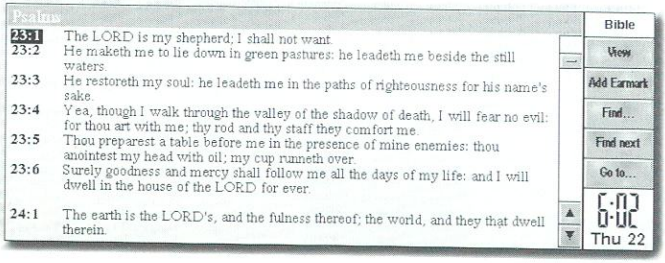
If I were a teacher of Religious Education, one sure-fire way to get the children interested in the Bible would be to have it available on my Psion. The Holy Bible from Palmtop BV makes that possible. Don't let the language of the King James Version put you off using this product as a tool to help you in your studies or devotional perusal.

Installation from CD-ROM was a breeze with the excellent PC-based installer. Although I had the 2MB of space needed for the whole Bible, the installation routine allows partial installations to save space. It was disappointing to discover there was no manual supplied, and even more so when I later found there was hardly any on-line help either. Undaunted, I started up the program and used the 'Preferences' option to change the screen layout to something I was more familiar with.

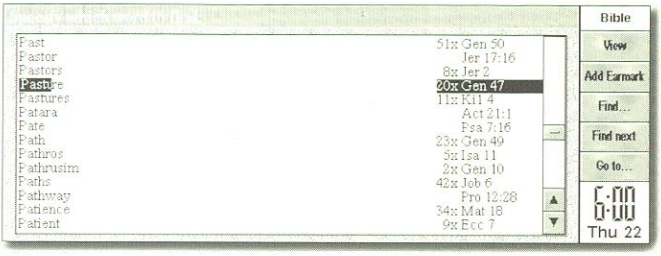
I then opted to locate the 23rd Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd", as something familiar to most people. Using the 'Find' option on the toolbar, a concordance list appeared. There are no boxes to complete—just type your search word and watch your Psion find the nearest match. I was initially deceived into thinking that there was only one reference for each word listed. Closer inspection revealed that the number displayed before the scripture reference indicated the number of links found.

Future versions would benefit from the ability to search a second time for another string, thus narrowing the number of found references to search through manually. The entry for "pastures" informed me that there were 11 possible references and I would have to begin in Kings. The only (rather basic) option I had in refining my search at a later date was to enter key words in the earmarks 'Memo' box and then use the menu option 'Tag if'.

If I were studying the Bible for myself or using it for research purposes the comprehensive concordance would save a lot of time and energy. If I were preparing a sermon around a certain theme I could do much of it using just my Psion—and I'm sure some do.


Psalms
23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
23:2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
23:3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
23:5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.
24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.
Bible
View
Add Earmark
Find...
Find next
Go to...
Thu 22

Once I had found my reference I chose the 'Add earmark' option from the toolbar and wrote a little note to myself. The memo box



Performing a 'find' operation—the main strength of a computer-based Bible

itself appears to have no restrictions, it simply scrolls your text along to the left. I then checked the 'View' option to make sure my notes were there for me to return to at a later date, but found that only a portion of my memo was displayed on the screen. The only way of reading the whole of it was to use the 'Edit earmark' menu option. I suggest keeping the memo section brief and opening up a WORD file for anything more detailed.

Using the 'View Earmarks' option I was able to keep track of the notes and searches I had made to date. Then, using the 'Export' option I was able to copy any amount of the Bible text to a WORD file to shape a sermon, essay or personal diary.

Much of the Bible is also freely available in WORD format (and in Modern English) on the Internet, and so The Holy Bible needs to stand on its 'value-added' features. Whether these are useful to you is bound to be a personal choice. From my own point of view I was impressed and frustrated in almost equal measures.

Serious Bible scholars would, I think, need more comprehensive search facilities than those offered here. A future version would also benefit from highlighting a found word when viewing a scripture (at the moment you have to scan verses by eye). Mind you, the current product is still worth using; with The Holy Bible, I have in the palm of my hand the equivalent of pen, paper, Bible and concordance. Imagine the joy of being able to compose a sermon with all of this in some of your most inspirational places. Using the 'Zoom' option to maximise the font may even allow you to sneak this into the pulpit!

Dawn Hamilton

The Holy Bible

From: All major Psion dealers

Availability: now

Contact: n/a

Runs on: Series 5/Geofox One

Supplied on: CD-ROM

Price: £39.95 including VAT

Rating:

Expense Manager

Series 5

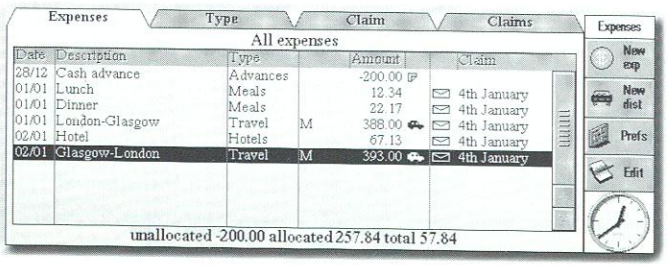
Given the sophistication of the Series 5 spreadsheet, it's arguable that most people could use nothing more than this to keep track of business (and other) expenses. Whereas this is true for the simplest of needs, Palmtop BV's Expense Manager not only helps to automate the process to some degree, but also enables accurate tracking of all expense categories and effortless reporting at the end of each business trip or accounting period.

On first starting up the program I have to confess that it took me a good half hour of experimenting to really get to grips with the program's interface. This was all without recourse to the printed manual though, so it wasn't *too* hard to learn.

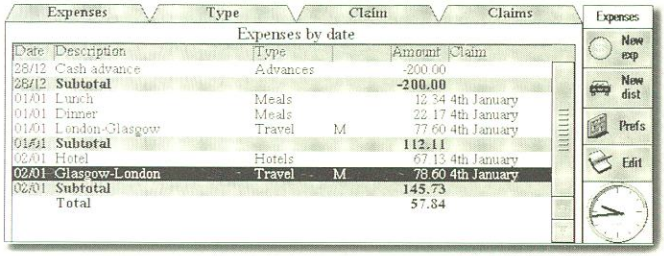
The interface at the Psion end is divided into four main 'pages', as per the 'tabbed' headings at the top of the program screen (see screenshot below). The first category, 'Expenses', is used to add all new expense items, whatever their type. These are added by pressing either the 'New exp' button or 'New dist' button on the toolbar. 'New exp' brings up a dialog prompting the user for the date of the expense (always defaulting to today), a textual description, amount, type (which brings up a multiple choice box where you can enter all your own types, like hotels, meals, travel, etc.), and 'claim', which is used to allocate each expense to a specific reimbursement claim. This would normally be added later, when expense claims are submitted for reimbursement. 'New dist' is used to log vehicle mileage items, and in this case the amount is replaced by a distance value, which can be in any unit, and costs can be allocated at rate per unit, so you can use it to track car expenses at pence per mile, francs per km, etc.

The next of the four screens, 'Type', can be used to filter out expenses of a particular category (as entered into the multiple choice dialog in the previous section). This is a great way to see at a glance how much you have spent on, say, hotel bills or telephone calls.

The 'Claim' screen shows all expenses assigned to each claim date or period, and like the 'Type' screen can be scrolled between different categories



Entering expense items into Expense Manager



A simple on-screen report. Expense Manager goes far beyond this level of sophistication if you need it...

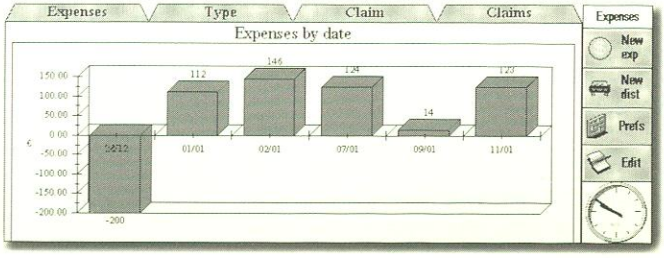
with a simple press of the arrow keys. The fourth and similarly named 'Claims' screen is used to show totals for each claim period, together with details of reimbursement amounts and any mismatches that occur in the totals.

Every expense entry can be set as either reimbursable or not, which makes it easy to keep a log of your own private expenses at the same time and have Expense Manager resolve everything properly at the reporting stage. All four of the main screens show neatly tabulated details of each entry with columns for all relevant details in each case. Extensive preferences options are used to tailor what is shown both on screen and in reports to make things appear just how you want them.

Tax is handled by checking an 'Ask tax' box in the setup. Each transaction dialog will then appear with an extra box showing the default VAT (tax) value you have entered. Like almost everything in Expense Manager this is fully configurable on a transaction-by-transaction basis. Paper reports are also very configurable, and you can define what appears on each column, what columns are printed, what range of transactions appear, or whether just a simple summary report is needed.

If you need to work with multiple currencies, Expense Manager allows more of them to be added, complete with full names and adjustable exchange rates. Subtotals for each currency are then shown in your reports, with each currency neatly separated.

A useful graph of your advances and expenditure, at the press of a button



As well as showing detailed reports both on screen and on paper, it will also produce neat and attractive bar graphs of expenditure and advances. These can be useful to get a quick overview of your finances.

But the flexibility goes even further. Some companies have very specific requirements on how expense forms are submitted to their accounts department. Expense Manager comes with an 'Expense Reporter' PC-based module that runs under Windows 95. This gives even more flexibility in report formatting, including the option to add text and company logos at the top of a form.

If you *still* can't get things looking the way your company wants them you can always export the data in text, DIF or Quicken format, and make further adjustments in another package. It's a slight omission that there's no option to export directly into Microsoft Excel or other spreadsheet formats, but most will import DIF, so it's not a major trouble.

If you use the optional Expense Reporter it's a simple matter to transfer the basic Expense Manager data into it using PsiWin. Those without Windows 95 will have to manage without the added sophistication of Expense Reporter, but it's important to emphasise that the vast majority of users will get perfectly adequate results without using this add-on module at all.

In summary, Expense Manager is a remarkably comprehensive tool, and something with this level of functionality wouldn't be out of place on a full-blown desktop computer. Considering the size and portability of the Psion 5 that's quite a feat. Most of us find expense tracking a major pain, and some even end up doing it all from a pile of unsorted receipts at the end of a business trip. The ability to enter everything 'as it happens' by popping a Psion out of your pocket is great news for the disorganised business person, and the fact that all the sums are carried out automatically reduces errors, which will please your accounts department too.

The only real criticisms of Expense Manager are that for some reason it offers no online help, and that it is complex enough to put off less serious users. If you are willing to spend the little time needed to get to grips with the program then it will amply reward you by making all your future expense reporting a real breeze.

Paul Nelson

Expense Manager

From: All major Psion dealers

Availability: now

Contact: n/a

Runs on: Series 5/Geofox One

Supplied on: floppy disk

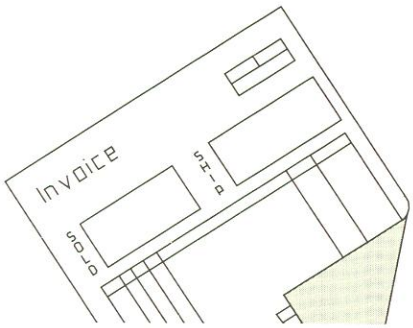
Price: £49.95 including VAT

Rating:

In-good-voice!

Some useful ideas to help you set up a complete invoicing system using nothing more than a Psion

by Steve Litchfield

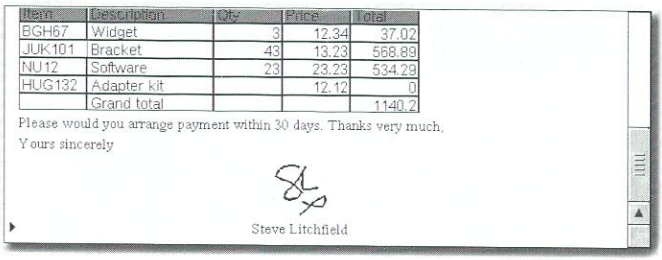


Over the last few issues of *Palmtop*, I've been looking in detail at how to use the built-in AGENDA application to carry out such business functions as project and contact management. The advantages of using one of the Psion applications in ROM are of course that there's no extra charge, and that you already know how to use them. I now turn to DATA, SHEET and WORD, with a view to managing and generating those essential paper-based parts of any business—invoices.

Although all the details and screen shots here are worked on a Series 5, there's absolutely no reason why you can't do the same on a Series 3 machine, albeit without some of the graphical panache. There will obviously be different keystrokes needed and terminology used in places, but the general ideas work just as well on the older Psions. In fact, I still use my trusty 3a for this purpose right up to the present day.

Sending out invoices is vital to your business because without them you don't get paid. From storing your customer details to cataloguing which invoice was sent to whom, to actually printing off bits of paper, it's very easy to tackle the job on your Psion. It can even be argued that the job works better on the palmtop because it's always with you, giving the opportunity to generate invoices on the move and reference your details while away from base.

If you're expecting fireworks and revolutionary techniques to achieve these aims then you'll be disappointed, as simple and thoughtful application is all that's needed to implement a working system. Even if you only take away one useful idea from this article, I'll have done my job.



Item	Description	Qty	Price	Total
BGH67	Widget	3	12.34	37.02
JUK101	Bracket	43	13.23	568.89
NU12	Software	23	23.23	534.29
HUG132	Adapter kit		12.12	0
	Grand total			1140.2

Please would you arrange payment within 30 days. Thanks very much.
Yours sincerely

Steve Litchfield

Part of an invoice sitting pretty on the Series 5

Where to start

The best place to start is in WORD. Let's create a template invoice, with all the fancy formatting techniques you learned from the WORD tutorials in *Palmtop* issues 6 to 11. Leave the 'Date:', 'To:' and 'Invoice no:' bits blank for now. The aim of the game is to save you time and typing by putting thought into this initial template. With the Series 5's object embedding it's easy to insert a neatly ruled spreadsheet to host our main invoice details. I've shown example sheets which will work in situations where you are invoicing for specific products or for your time, but your own sheets should represent how *your* business charges its customers. Looking at my own invoices, they all fall into two or three standard categories and a templated approach works very well. Use a simple formula under 'Total' to multiply the 'Quantity' and 'Price' columns and a simple SUM function to add the 'Total' column itself.

If you have relatively few products or services it should be possible to have all the options laid out in the embedded sheet(s), waiting for you to ignore or delete the bits which are not applicable.

On the other hand, if your business deals with dozens or even hundreds of possible sale items, you'll be best off having a separate SHEET file containing your products and price list. As long as you keep the general column format consistent with what's required from an invoice, you'll be able to copy and paste the information into an embedded invoice spreadsheet as needed. An advantage of keeping your master list of products and prices in SHEET is that you can also implement a basic level of stock control, with reorder flagging and inventory reporting. Actually programming this is not trivial and will need to be the subject of a future article.

Take your time

Feel free to take time to set up the formatting, shading and so forth, as this will hopefully be a one-off operation. Remember to highlight the cells that contain prices and set their number format to 'Currency'. Before you close the embedded SHEET object, go into 'Print setup' and tick the 'Print grid lines' check box. 3a/3c owners can either 'Bring' the spreadsheet information across from named files as needed, or

perhaps just have 'standard' phrases and information lines which can be deleted or amended as appropriate in WORD.

As we're doing this on the Series 5, and as you'll see from the screenshots, I couldn't resist popping a few pictures in as well. Typically this would be your company logo and perhaps a signature. Again, feel free to be creative with text emphases and paragraph borders.

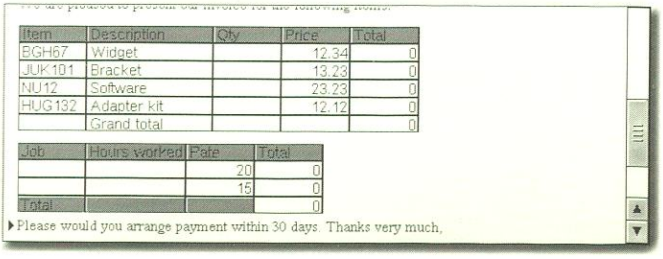
Having completed the blank invoice, or at least your first 'cut' at it, save it as 'InvoiceTemplate' and use 'File/Properties' in the system screen to set it as 'Read-only'. This will ensure that actual invoices don't overwrite the template.

The customer database

The second component of our invoicing system is the customer database. You may already have your customers' details in a DATA file of suitable format, or you may wish to start a new database. Either way, the aim is to have contact and company names plus addresses in the right format for highlighting and copying (via the Series 5 clipboard) into WORD later on. If you are using an existing database file and the labels aren't in the right order, note that 'Label preferences' will let you reorder them as needed.

Invoice numbering

Finally we need a way of allocating and tracking invoice numbers, including notes of which ones have been paid. SHEET is the most suitable application for this, with a simple tabular layout allowing all the flexibility we need. Create a named spreadsheet called 'Invoices'. Note that the leftmost column of invoice numbers can be generated by a trivial formula where each cell is equal to the one above plus one. This will save you typing all the numbers in manually and will stop you missing any out by mistake. The 'To:' column only needs to contain enough information to identify the customer, so a simple abbreviation or reference code would suffice. Remember that all customer detail is held once only, in the database; as with all parts of any workable scheme, the aim is to avoid duplicating effort.

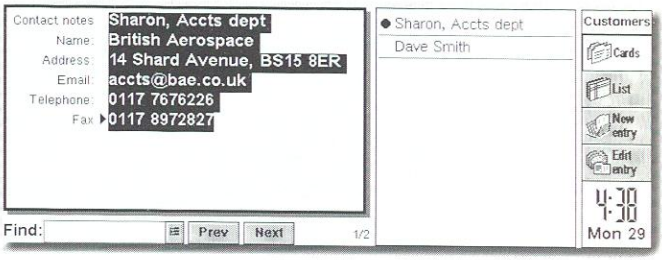


Item	Description	Qty	Price	Total
BGH67	Widget		12.34	0
JUK101	Bracket		13.23	0
NU12	Software		23.23	0
HUG132	Adapter kit		12.12	0
	Grand total			0

Job	Hours worked	Rate	Total
		20	0
		15	0
Total			0

Please would you arrange payment within 30 days. Thanks very much,

Part of the way through setting up a template invoice



The main customer database

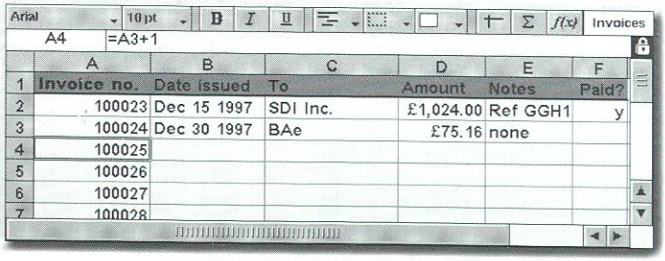
Moving on

I'm sure you'll be well ahead of me by now, but I'll very briefly step through the sequence of events in which the above files are used. I'd recommend keeping all files together in a named folder. Work is done or product sold, necessitating an invoice to the customer concerned.

Start in the 'Invoices' spreadsheet, taking the next available number and filling in the recipient name and date. Then in the customer database, look up the appropriate record or add one in if necessary. Highlight the contact name and address details and use <Ctrl><C> or equivalent to copy them to the clipboard. Remember that the Psion is a multitasking computer and you can leave all these files open most of the time, for convenient access via the application buttons.

Now press <System> and open up 'InvoiceTemplate', using 'File/More/Save As' to save it immediately with a name such as 'Inv*NNNN*', where *NNNN* is the invoice number being constructed, as allocated in the spreadsheet. Move to the 'Date:' section and fill it in. Then to 'To:', and use <Ctrl><V> or equivalent to paste in the customer details.

The invoice number can be typed in at the end of the heading line before moving down to the tables. If an embedded sheet is not appropriate for this invoice then delete it with the <Del> key. Selecting a table on the Series 5 and then tapping on it (or pressing <Enter>) will bring the under-



	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Invoice no.	Date issued	To	Amount	Notes	Paid?
2	100023	Dec 15 1997	SDI Inc.	£1,024.00	Ref GGH1	y
3	100024	Dec 30 1997	BAe	£75.16	none	
4	100025					
5	100026					
6	100027					
7	100028					

Numbering the invoices

lying spreadsheet up on screen for editing. If you'd thought ahead sufficiently when setting up the template file, the editing will be a simple filling-in of a few blanks, with the SHEET calculation engine doing the adding up for you. Again, just delete rows if not needed, or add extra ones, though note that if you do a lot of extra editing on each invoice you may as well have created each one from scratch in the first place!

Keeping track

It only remains to print the invoice off and close the file. Do remember, when payment finally comes in, to go back to the Invoices spreadsheet and update the other columns to reflect the event, as this file will become an essential reference for your business.

Incidentally, although we worked from a read-only template and used 'Save as' to create each new invoice, the procedure is slightly tedious and there is a faster way. Get hold of John McAleely's freeware utility 'Stationery Pad', which not only does this for you, but also offers 'point-and-shoot' selection of up to 16 standard types of invoice or other business form.

You'll note that we're keeping every invoice saved in a named file for posterity, in case we need a duplicate. In the UK, the tax authorities dictate that these files (or at least paper copies thereof) must be kept for at least 6 years. This would tend to fill up your Psion quite quickly, so I'd recommend archiving your invoices onto a PC every now and then if you have this facility. Just so long as the files are available when a customer says "Sorry, I've lost your invoice and so can't pay you. Can you send me another copy?"

Keeping it safe...

One final note: do please make sure you do regular daily or weekly backups of your precious Psion, especially as it now contains important information which your business depends upon.

Invoice away!

FOR SALE

1MB Psion Workabout plus docking holster and LIF adaptor - £175. Also Garmin GPS38 plus data cable - £85. Both as new, boxed with manuals,etc.

Contact: Bob Smith 0181 656 1358.

Series 3c (2MB), AC adaptor, leather case and cordura zipper wallet for 3c and travel modem (travel modem not included) - £135, 4MB flash SSD - £80, 512K RAM SSD - £50, PsiMail Internet - £30, Cyclone drive for Series 3c - £80, Monopoly on SSD - £20, Purple Chess on SSD -£20, PsiWin - £20, PsiFax on SSD - £20, Berlitz Interpreter on SSD - £20, Berlitz Phrasebook -£20. Alternatively, everything for £380. All in good condition with manuals.

Contact: John Wallis - 0171 890 4075 (week-days, 9am-5pm only)

email: Jwallis@Psionworld.net

2MB PSION Series 3a plus Case, 3 Fax, Telenote Link for Vodafone Digital Network, Purple Software Cyclone for 3a, MultiVue 2.1, Symantec Act v1, Soundmaster for 3a, Printing Cable for 3a, 3Link Cable, Psi Win v 1, Instruction Manuals - £120 for everything.

Contact: Peter Haines 01427 810934
eMail: phaines182@aol.com

Psion Chess on SSD - £15, OrgChart on floppy disk - £19, DrawIt on floppy disk - £19, Paint and Compose on SSD - £19, Canon BJ30 with spare ink cartridges - £49, RangerDisk floppy drive - £49, Covertec case - £29, toast rack - £3.50, 'Introduction to using the Psion Series 3' - £4.75.

Contact: John 01494 864273

Using the Palmtop CD

Windows users who receive the CD should double-click on the file 'Start.htm'. On most PCs the web browser will leap into life and display the CD interface. If nothing happens, or if Windows asks how the file should be displayed, cancel the operation and install Microsoft Internet Explorer from the CD. Both 16 and 32-bit versions can be found in the '\msie' directory. After installation, try double-clicking on 'Start.htm' again.

DOS, Amiga and Archimedes owners will be restricted in what they can view on the CD, but will hopefully still be able to browse the 3-Lib library section and copy off the software as needed.

Macintosh users should simply drag the 'START.HTM' file onto their web browser, where it will load the interface just like on a PC. Those without a browser can simply load the free copy of Internet Explorer 3.01 from the 'Macintosh' folder within the 'msie' folder. Please note that the Psion screen saver, demos and emulators are all designed to run on PCs, so they will not work directly on your Mac.

Rainy Days and Mondays

Pete Sipple takes a look behind the scenes at Psion's Technical Support department in London

As anyone who's ever needed the services of just about any company's Technical Support department will know, it's not always easy to get through—and even harder to get the answer to your question quickly and in a easily digestible form. Knowing that you're slowly moving up a long queue does little to ease your stress levels whilst you wait for "an available operator". With a wide range of Psion hardware and software products on the market, those responsible for offering support to their users have a tough job on their hands. We took a behind-the-scenes look at this important and much criticised department.

On the first floor of Psion PLC's Red Place office, you'll find the twenty-strong team responsible for solving our problems. On *Palmtop*'s behalf, I spent a fascinating day observing how the department works, and talking to the people who dealt with over 110,000 telephone calls last year alone.

Overseeing the operation are Adrian Monk - Technical Support Supervisor, and Rob Edwards - Technical Training Manager. Under them are two Team Leaders and a total of 16 Support

1 Red Place, London

Adrian Monk

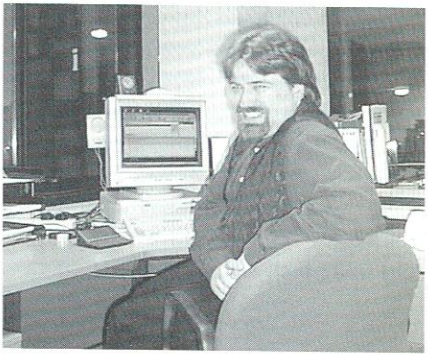
Advisors. Detailed telephone statistics are kept for each day's calls, and the log reports show that on an average day the team handle between 300 and 500. Most callers will currently have to spend some time queuing for attention, with the average wait time being around eight minutes.

The Support Advisors, or agents, work closely together in a large open-plan office, and have to deal not only with phone calls, but also a host of enquiries received by post, email and fax. The first priority is to the incoming telephone call, and an overhead display board gives a constant reminder that there are more people queuing, waiting for the answer to their problems.

Each agent has their own work area, with telephone headset, a collection of manuals, a PC linked to Psion's internal message system, and, of course, a selection of Psion machines. When a member of the team is talking a caller through a problem, it's policy to use an actual machine and not an emulator, so at first glance the staff seem to be ignoring their desktop PCs in favour of tapping away on their palmtops. Obviously, it's impossible for each agent to know the answer to every question, and so an impressive amount of reference material is readily at hand. Each PC has access to the Internet, so that staff can search for information from other companies' web sites. This is particularly useful when a problem relates to non-Psion hardware or software. There is also a comprehensive 'library' containing various journals and manuals. I was pleased to see a collection of *Palmtop* back issues both in the library and on various Advisors' desks, proving that *Palmtop* fulfils its brief as an excellent reference tool.

Making the grade

The Support Advisors not only need technical knowledge, but have to be excellent communicators, have a good telephone manner, and in some cases, the patience of a Saint.

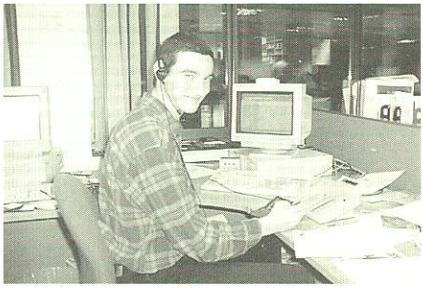


Rob Edwards

Rob, who also looks after Psion's training courses, explained how new recruits are brought up to speed. After an initial induction, new staff are put in a room with the latest Psion hardware and left to play with the machines to see what makes them tick. This hands-on session gives the trainer and trainee a feel for how much work is needed before the rookie can be let loose on the public. At various intervals during training a series of questionnaires will appear, which mostly contain samples of genuine queries, to test how the agent responds. The remainder of the four weeks' training consists of observing other agents at work. Psion actively encourage their staff to spend as much time as possible gaining experience of the hardware they'll be supporting, and the team are issued with their own machines: at present a 3c, Siena and a Series 5, so they can become as knowledgeable as possible.

Read the friendly manual

New Psion products are supplied with a manual, but as we all know, some are better than others, and in some cases, the manual is either confusing, vague, or in extremes even wrong. While many of the answers to frequent questions can be found in the manuals, you can only find them if you know what you're looking for, and many of us sometimes flounder. For this reason, Technical Support have found it useful to provide their own written material on selected topics. Many tips can be found in the Psion Support Bulletin, and a large selection of the most common queries can be accessed either by Technical Support's Faxback service, or from the Support pages on Psion PLC's website.



Nigel on the front line

The front line

I had the opportunity to chat to one of the Technical Support Advisors, Chris Pope, towards the end of another busy day. Chris joined the company 14 months ago and spends a minimum of four hours a day talking to customers. A typical day will be split into a pair of two-hour shifts, which allows the agents to take a break from the phones so they have time to research the answers to the trickier questions, as well as to reply to the many emails, letters and faxes.

Chris has instant access to Psion's internal 'knowledgebase', which contains extensive comments and reports, from the alpha versions of Psion's software right up to the release versions. If a problem's been reported before there'll be a note of it some-

where, often with notes or comments from the actual programmer. The knowledgebase, together with other useful databases and the company's internal email system are all linked using Lotus Notes, and each agent is able to post questions or feedback directly to Psion Development or to Psion Software.

It's not just a case of knowing how to work, say, AGENDA. Although a fair percentage of the calls are 'easy', there is a lot for the agent to know, and it takes time to acquire that knowledge. Agents frequently field questions on printing via a PC or Macintosh, data synchronisation, file conversion, Short Message Services (SMS), web browsing, email setup, as well as other software packages produced by Psion.

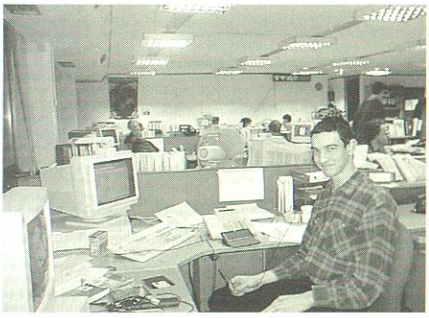
Some of the more complex issues such as PsiWin connectivity require an extensive understanding of PCs too, where problems tend to be more to do with the customer's PC setup than with Psion's software or hardware. The introduction of the Series 5 has also made life much harder for the online agents, with its different keypresses, software changes and new connectivity options.

Every now and then, a user will call with a complex query relating to an obscure communications issue or some obsolete product or program. This can result in a search for an elusive piece of old hardware, or having to fish through the extensive Psion documentation before the answer can be found.

Urban myths

In the world of Information Technology, 'Urban Myths' are common, and I was anxious to question the team for some of their more amusing anecdotes—I wasn't disappointed. One caller who, fearful of dropping his faithful Psion, phoned Tech Support asking for more information about "This password thing" that "...protects my machine". Another common call is from a user reporting a broken machine—"everything I type is coming out in capital letters!" The voice at the end of the phone politely explains where the 'Caps Lock' button is located, and the red-faced caller mutters a sheepish "thank you". There have been other genuine instances of 'Urban Myths' in the past, such a caller loading MCLink software from 5¼" floppy disks, saying that they can't 'Insert Disk 3' as requested, because Disks 1 and 2 are already in the way. One user with a faulty 3Link was asked to send it in so that the connector could be checked. When the package was opened by Psion they found that the user had just snipped off the 9-pin connector with pliers and sent that in without the cable—helpful.

Another tale concerns the gentleman who packaged up his Series 3 and posted it to Psion with a note saying that full details of the fault were to be found in a letter stored on the machine as a WORD document. Unfortunately, the covering note neglected to mention that the machine was password protected. Not only could the team not get to the letter, but the user's return mail address and phone number were inaccessible too.



An agent's workstation

The dreaded call

So, what is the worst kind of call the team typically has to answer? Fortunately it's not that common, but the one the agents dread most is from a user who has ignored a 'low backup battery' message, changed the main batteries, and then phoned saying "When I switched on the machine, it beeped and I can't find my data—where is it?" The answer, of course, is "gone forever". The reaction is anything from anger to anguish. Of course, we *all* take regular backups, don't we?

Don't let them get you down...

Obviously, there is some reward in helping out fellow Psion users, and most of the calls received are from friendly and courteous people, but patience is stretched to the limit by the abusive or unhelpful callers. Two examples of the type of call that most frustrate the agents are the "I've got seventeen questions with PsiWin—where would you like me to start?" caller, or, after winding down a 45 minute conversation about setting up email, the voice at the end of the phone will say "oh—one more thing..."

I know from my own experience as an IT Support Manager that life would be a lot easier without ringing phones and users who just don't want to listen. The Tech Support managers are aware of this, and the staff are encouraged to be polite at all times, even though it's not always easy. It may be the tenth time in a single day that an agent has explained how to backup a file to an SSD, but the customer must be made to feel at ease, and have their problem solved without the technical jargon, and more impor-

tantly it must always be with courtesy and a smile.

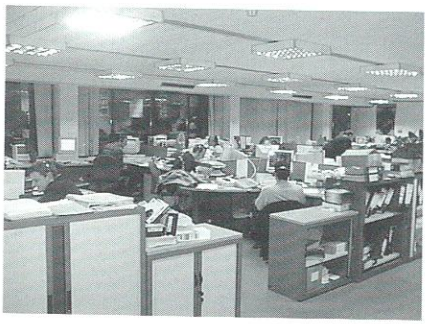
Be patient

Rob and Adrian were the first to admit that it's not always easy, and it can be frustrating trying to get hold of Psion Technical Support—the lines *do* get very busy. The trick is to avoid the busiest times, which are most typically first thing on a Monday morning, or when it's raining (Rainy days and Mondays...) Another way of getting priority attention is to join the Gold Support Service, which gives you access to a subscriber-only telephone hotline. Overall, the motto is 'be patient'. I came away from my afternoon with Technical Support feeling that the team has a genuine desire to help Psion users—and that they really try their best.

Ringing the changes

Recent alterations to the structure of Psion mean that times are changing. Plans are afoot to restructure the way the department works, to include better call tracking and improved monitoring of call types, which will allow trend-spotting. There are now improved communications between the departments, which mean that Development are liaising with Technical Support to find out where end-users are experiencing problems and where improvements can be made. I also had the opportunity to speak to Malcolm Workman, the Customer Services Supervisor, whose eight-strong team handled an impressive 141,000 calls in 1997. They share an adjacent office to Tech Support and it's clear that the two departments have strong links with each other, as there is inevitably a lot of call crossover. Frustrated users can have a certain amount of confidence that their comments are being noted, and fed to those who need to know.

I'd like to personally thank Rob, Adrian and the team for taking the time to talk to me and for giving us all an insight into what goes on behind the scenes.



Making an OUTLINE

Outlining is a useful facility that many Series 3a, 3c and Siena users completely ignore. Steve Clack looks at the principles behind this under-used feature

You may have been using WORD on your Series 3a, 3c or Siena for months or even years without using the outlining feature. Or you may have inadvertently pressed the diamond key while in WORD, only to find part of your text apparently disappear, or to see a message 'Nothing to show in outline' flash up in the bottom right of your screen.

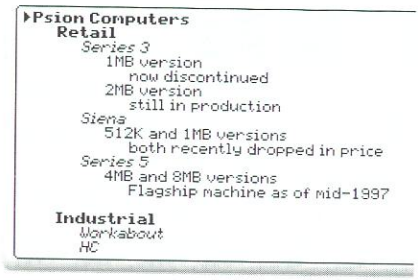
Outlining started off more than 10 years ago in stand-alone 'thought processing' programs, designed to allow a logical, multi-tiered arrangement of notes. This was always a rather exotic claim, as an outline does nothing more than place one group of sentences or 'ideas' beneath another, just like related bullet points beneath a single subheading, related files in a folder, and so on. Nowadays stand-alone outliners are uncommon, and most decent word processors have some kind of facility built in. WORD on the 3a/3c/Siena is no exception, and although less flexible than most desktop computer equivalents it is nonetheless a handy feature.

Outlining is one of the areas where Series 5 owners are the 'poor relations', as Psion didn't manage to squeeze any outlining support into the S5, though this may (or may not) be remedied in the forthcoming ROM version 1.1 due out sometime soon.

The basics

So how does it work? The easiest way to demonstrate the concept is firstly to show a sample document in 'outline view', and then to explain the mechanisms behind it.

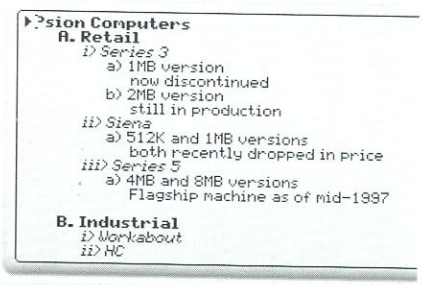
The example on the following page shows some structured notes on the range of Psion computers: The top level heading is 'Psion computers'. This is divided into two main groups: 'Retail' and 'Industrial', which are represented



A five-level indented outline

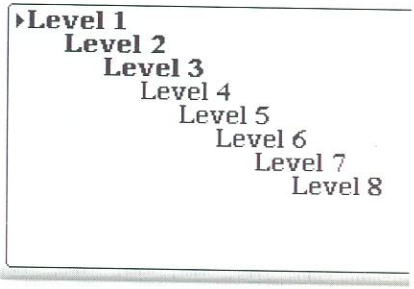
by the bold headings indented one tab from the left. The next level (indented by one more 'tab') contains each machine type under the relevant heading, and a further level is used for additional notes on each one.

This 'five level' example shows how hierarchical notes can be arranged in such a way that each sub-idea is indented from its 'parent' idea. The screenshot below shows how the structure can be made easier to follow on paper (or screen) by assigning some kind of numbering and/or lettering system to the various levels. Most PC-based outliners will automatically add these numbering options for you, but on a Psion it must be done manually.



Making things easier to read...

Psion-based outlines can have up to nine nested levels, but anything above four or five gets awkward to follow.

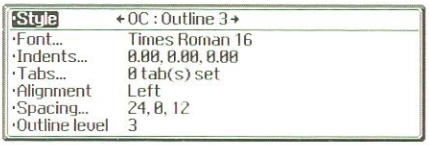


Lots of levels

Setting up an outline

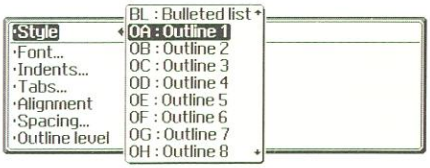
When creating an outline, the first step is to assign 'levels' to each style you wish to view in outline mode. If you are not familiar with using styles in WORD then you'll need to look them up in the Psion User Guide, or consult our 'Working with WORD' series in issues 6-11 of *Palmtop*. Be aware that although you will probably apply bold styles (usually in a larger typeface, as they are headings) to the first few levels of your outline, you can actually apply whatever font and other attributes you like to *any* outline level. You can also have more than one style assigned to the same outline level, which means you can have additional bulleted or indented styles on a given level.

Once you have defined some styles with appropriate outline levels you can start your document. The Psions won't allow you to view the outline indents as you



Defining outline styles

type, so you have to apply each style in 'normal' mode, then press the diamond key to switch to outline mode so that you can see everything with the indents applied. This makes it much more difficult to see where each block of text is in relation to another, so if you are creating an outline with more than a few levels it's easiest to use clearly descriptive style names (such as 'OA' for outline level 1, 'OB' for level 2, 'OC for level 3 and so on). It is the value you enter in the 'Outline level' line of the 'Style gallery' dialog box (see shot above) that governs how each style is indented.



Outline styles assigned for every level

It's a good idea to use <Psion><Q> to go into the preferences menu and set 'Show style bar' to 'Yes', so that the style for every line is displayed. This makes it much easier to see what level you have assigned to each paragraph of text.

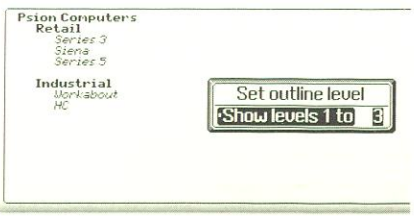
Construct your document by holding down the <Control> key and typing the

...easier to view with the style bar on

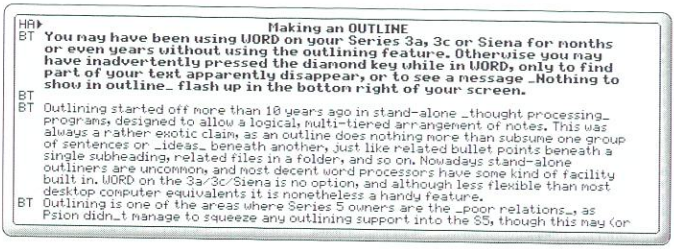
two letter style code for each item. Don't forget that each element in your outline can contain as many lines of text as you like—the whole block will be indented together. Remember to drop the outline level down by one (e.g. from 'OC' to 'OD') to indent by one increment, and do the opposite when you want to go back up a level.

Viewing your outline

A quick press of the diamond key will view your outline in its fully indented glory at any time, and a second press will take you back to 'normal' editing mode. As shown in the screen shot below, it's possible to control the number of outline levels that appear in outline mode by pressing <Psion><H>.



Showing just what you want


HA
Making an OUTLINE
BT You may have been using WORD on your Series 3a, 3c or Siena for months or even years without using the outlining feature. Otherwise you may have inadvertently pressed the diamond key while in WORD, only to find part of your text apparently disappear, or to see a message _Nothing to show in outline_ flash up in the botton right of your screen.
BT
BT Outlining started off more than 10 years ago in stand-alone _thought processing_ programs, designed to allow a logical, multi-tiered arrangement of notes. This was always a rather exotic claim, as an outline does nothing more than subsume one group of sentences or _ideas_ beneath another, just like related bullet points beneath a single subheading, related files in a folder, and so on. Nowadays stand-alone outliners are uncommon, and most decent word processors have some kind of facility built in. WORD on the 3a/3c/Siena is no option, and although less flexible than most desktop computer equivalents it is nonetheless a handy feature.
BT Outlining is one of the areas where Series 5 owners are the _poor relations_, as Psion didn_t manage to squeeze any outlining support into the S5, though this may (or

This very article, entered in WORD, using only the three built-in styles

This sets the highest level that will appear in outline view, and can be used to make a long or multi-level document easier to read.

Easy outlining

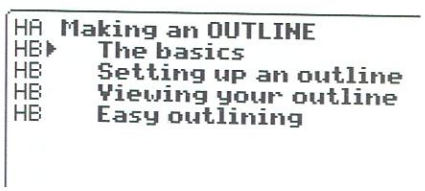
Many users will find the biggest use of outlining on a Psion is simply to display paragraph headings to give an overview of a document. You can perform this simple type of outlining without any setup required. The built-in heading styles, 'HA' and 'HB' are already set to outline levels 1 and 2 respectively, and standard body text is set to level 9, which *never* appears in outline view. In this way, the headings are always left in neat order, uncluttered on your screen.

To use this basic 3-level outlining, just apply the 'HA' style wherever you want a top-level heading to be centred across the page, 'HB' to a left aligned heading that's indented from 'HA', and your body text in the usual 'BT' style below it.

This simple setup is ideal for organising long text documents such as reports, which contain several paragraph headings. A quick press of the diamond key hides all the body text, leaving only the headings, from which it's easy to traverse the entire document. Moving the cursor to any heading and then re-expanding the document with a second press of the diamond key will send you straight to the right place for instant editing—much quicker than just holding down the up or down arrow keys.

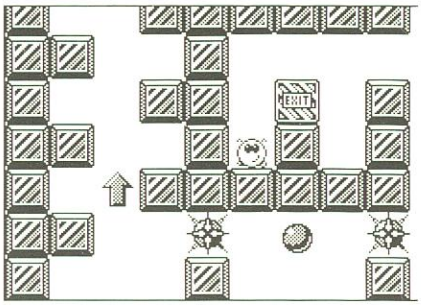
The examples on this page show part of the text of this very article, with the main article heading in 'HA' heading style, the subheadings (the ones that appear in a larger bold typeface in the article) as 'HB' headings, and the main body text as 'BT'.

Hopefully this article has given you enough information to make more use of this useful feature on the Series 3 range.



The same text, collapsed as an outline

Desert island games



Three people nominate their favourite Series 3a/3c games of all time

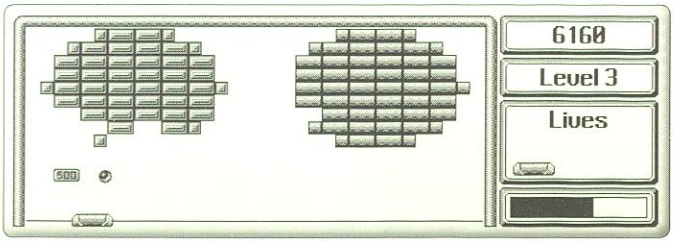
Psion palmtops are of course very sophisticated and capable computers, with the power to do serious work. Still, all work and no play makes for a boring lifestyle, and in any case, a little recreation can be stimulating to the brain—can't it?

The Series 5 hasn't matured as a games platform yet, so the 3a/3c is still the king of palmtop gaming. In the next six pages we'll take a look at the nine best Series 3a/3c games ever—at least in the eyes of the three people evaluating them.

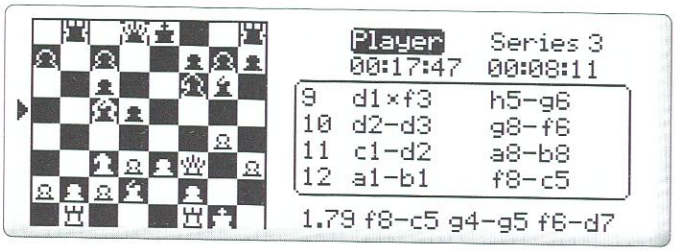
Steve Litchfield

PopOut

Jon Read's contribution to the original (and best) Psion 3a Games Pack was an all-time classic. PopOut was ostensibly just a 'Breakout' clone, but the combination of smooth animation, challenging gameplay and falling objects turned a good idea into something tremendously addictive. Each of the objects could be caught with your bat and performed different operations.



Popout. From Psion's original 3a Games Pack



Psion's original Series 3 Chess. You'll have to search around to find this one in the shops

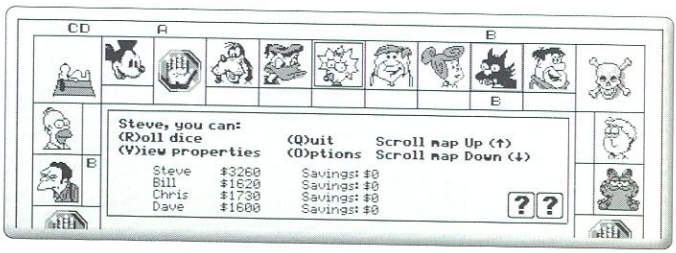
Some killed you, some advanced you a level or slowed you down, but my favourite had to be the revolver. Once captured, you got to shoot the bricks down with bullets as well as keeping the ball going. Utterly brilliant.

Psion Chess

I know the editor asked me for my favourite 3a/3c games, but I'm going to cheat a little here and include a Series 3 classic game instead. It ran on the 3a /3c well enough, in full screen 'compatibility' mode. Psion's chess engine was established back in the eighties and was a natural port onto the Series 3 range. The strength of its gameplay astonished both myself and all my colleagues at the time, with a multi-threaded interface and an optional 3D view of the board. The best bit was being able to call up, in real-time, the Psion's current thinking and best move found so far, giving an insight into what it was up to. I always thought it a great pity that Psion never updated the program to take advantage of the 3a/3c's superior graphics, but the core game engine remained as good as ever. In recent years Purple Software have taken over the chess mantle, but my heart still belongs to Psion's remarkable original.

Greedy

After my previous two 'commercial' selections, the third will come as something of a shock—it's completely free. Fred Botton released his Monopoly clone as freeware and it was rapturously received. To avoid copyright problems he 'tweaked' the concept slightly to use families of famous cartoon characters instead of properties. Plenty of little touches delight, such as the lovely



Greedy. The author wasn't, though—he made it freeware!

sound effects and photogenic characters. If anything it's more fun than the original, and a definite hit!

Steve Clack

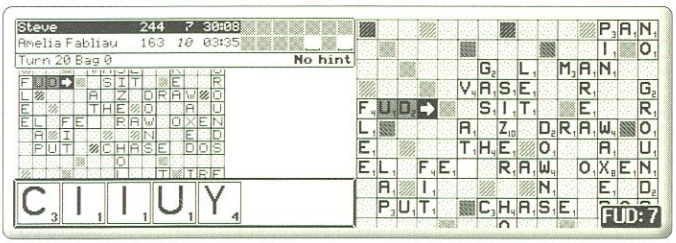
Scrabble

If I were stranded on a desert island with a 3a/3c and one games program (and hopefully a few tons of AA batteries), I wouldn't hesitate for a moment before choosing Psion's Scrabble. I gave this a rave review back in issue 8, and in my opinion it's still the best Psion game, *ever*. I could go on endlessly about the great implementation of this classic word game on the small screen, or how it caters for every level of player from beginner to primadonna. Suffice to say that this is a real treat for *anyone* who enjoys Scrabble, and indispensable for those who play it seriously.

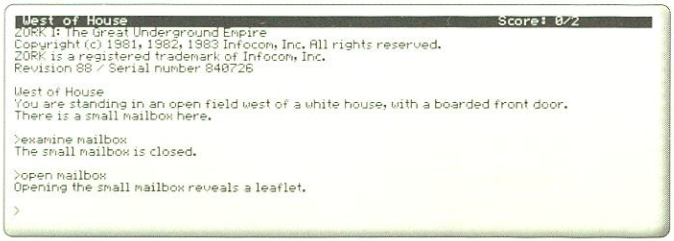
Perhaps the biggest attraction of Scrabble is its longevity. This isn't a game you're likely to get tired of in a hurry, nor will you outgrow it. Shoot-em-ups may be fun in the short-term, but the interest tends to pall as the hours pass, and usually dies completely once all the levels have been completed.

The Lost Treasures of Infocom

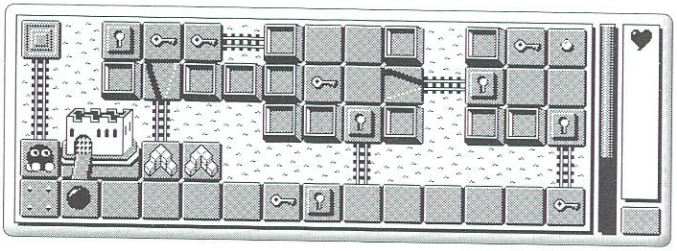
Another game that will stand the test of time. 'Lost Treasures' is a collection of 25 of the best Infocom text-based PC adventure games, shipped with an interpreter 'engine' that allows them to run on the Series 3a or 3c. This game is a little more tricky to access from a desert island, as the five PC floppy disks it's supplied on mean that you'll either need a Cyclone floppy drive or a full-blown PC to load all the games into your Psion.



Psion's Scrabble. Super-slick and you'll play it for years


West of House
Score: 0/2
ZORK I: The Great Underground Empire
Copyright (c) 1981, 1982, 1983 Infocom, Inc. All rights reserved.
ZORK is a registered trademark of Infocom, Inc.
Revision 88 / Serial number 840726
West of House
You are standing in an open field west of a white house, with a boarded front door.
There is a small mailbox here.
>examine mailbox
The small mailbox is closed.
>open mailbox
Opening the small mailbox reveals a leaflet.
>

'Lost Treasures...', endless hours of absorbing adventure



Bomz. An arcade game with attitude...

Of course, you could always put them all onto SSD, but you'd need almost 4MB of space to fit them all in. In reality the games are intended to be loaded and played one at a time, and considering that each one has enough depth to give weeks or months of enjoyment then you'll hardly be loading up new games too frequently.

The beauty of these games is firstly that at only £40 such a huge collection represents fantastic value for money, and secondly that the games themselves are so absorbing. Text-based adventure games lose little from having no graphics or whizz-bang sound effects—like the analogy between a good book and a feature film, the pure text option gives your imagination free rein and is often more involving.

The 25 games (the software has been revised and expanded a little since our review in issue 3) cover adventure, horror, fantasy, mystery and science fiction (including the classic *Hitchhiker's Guide to The Galaxy*). With something to suit everyone, the 'Lost Treasures of Infocom' collection is stimulating, engrossing and will give many months of entertainment.

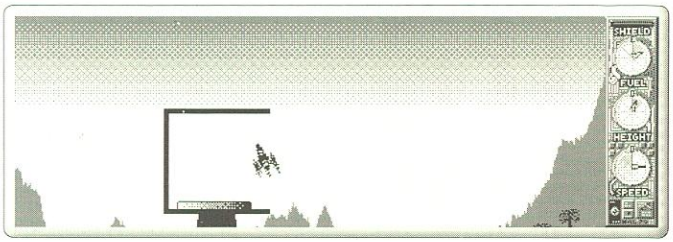
Bomz3a

As far as arcade-style games go, Bomz3a is a little unconventional. Rather than using the 'Pac-Man' approach of simply dashing around avoiding obstacles and collecting objects on each level, Bomz3a adds a good measure of strategy by broadening the range of obstacles. This shifts the emphasis to make it more of a puzzle than an arcade game. There are certainly some instances where you must move quickly to complete a level, but in most cases you can take your time to carefully plan your route across each of the 80 levels. Bomz3a is the thinking person's chase game.

Paul Nelson

Lander

The aim is simple: you are the pilot of a space freighter 'rocket', and you must travel to distant planets, land your ship safely, pick up cargo, then take off and go on to the next planet. You collect money for each successful trip, and thus build up your score.



Lander. Boldly go where no Psion user has gone before...

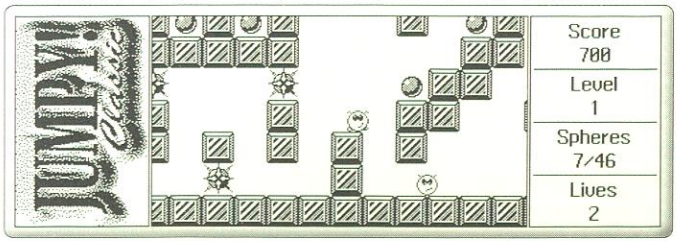
The catch is that some landing pads are in awkward, inaccessible places with various obstacles in the way, and some planets are even designated as war zones, so be prepared to be shot at on the way in (and out). Your only controls on the spaceship are an engine thruster and 'steering', done by rotating the ship with the arrow keys. Strategy comes into the game by having to decide how much fuel to put in, what repairs to make, and so on. Each planet has different characteristics such as gravity and atmospheric density, so if you put in too much fuel on a planet with high gravity you'll have trouble even getting off the ground!

Despite its simplicity Lander can be quite gripping to play, and the sound effects and tongue-in-cheek story line (complete with hyperspace effects) all add to the entertainment value. It's time to boldly go...

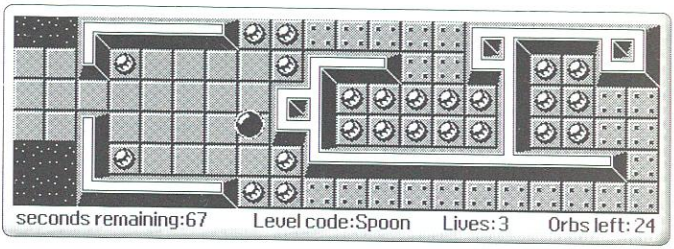
Jumpy!

One of the best known shareware games for the Psion range, this little gem was only available in the Series 3 'Classic' version until recently, but the author, Jon Read, has now created a full 3a/3c version for our delectation. Your 'little man' has to hop around the screen, gobbling up all the 'spheres' in order to clear each level. You have to dodge the spikes and creatures while you're at it, or you'll be killed off in a trice.

Jumpy! has a certain charm you won't find in many other games, the animation is good and the levels give plenty of variety to keep the interest up. A major enhancement in this new 'Jumpy! Classic' version is the improved sound effects that take advantage of the 3a/3c's superior sound capability. An old favourite just got even better, and there's now even a Siena version.



Jumpy! Classic. The 3a/3c update to another old Series 3 favourite



Fast and furious fun. Psion's Stigma

Stigma

Another fast and furious game like Jumpy! and Lander, Stigma from Psion's Games Deluxe is a sort of high-tech pinball. Use the arrow keys to whizz your ball around the screen and knock out all the balls in the maze, then whip out of the exit before the time limit is up.

Some of the 'tiles' you pass over cause your ball to stick, skid or deflect, so there is some strategy to it all, but first and foremost it's a quick-fire test of your hand-eye coordination, designed to get the adrenaline flowing!

Availability

Of the nine games discussed here, remarkably, three of them (PopOut, Lander and Bomz3a) are from Psion's *Games 3a* collection. This is still available on SSD at £39.95 including VAT, and also contains the famous Fairway golf game and Homerun patience as included in the later 1MB and 2MB Series 3a/3c machines. Games 3a was reviewed in more depth in issue 2.

Psion's original Series 3 Chess will be hard to find nowadays and you are most likely to find yourself a copy on the second-hand market, perhaps in the classified advertisement within *Palmtop*.

Greedy is freeware, and is included on the new Palmtop CD-ROM and available from *ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/FBotton/psion.htm*

Psion Scrabble is available from all major Psion dealers on SSD at £49.95 including VAT. A much more comprehensive review appeared in issue 9 of *Palmtop*.

The Lost Treasures of Infocom was reviewed back in issue 3, though the game has been revised since then with the addition of three new games and a modified interface so you can run the games from a Windows PC too. The price has also dropped, to £39.95 including VAT. Contact Interdata Developments on 0161 7922871 for more details.

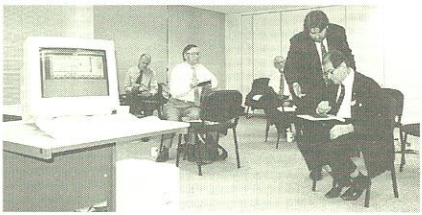
Jumpy! Classic is shareware at £10, and can be downloaded directly from *www.ecs.soton.ac.uk/~jnr95r/jumpy.html*

Stigma appears on Psion's Games Deluxe together with five other games, and was reviewed in issue 5, at £39.95 including VAT.

Right on course

If you're a beginner, will one of Psion's new training courses be the answer to your problems?

Brian Read reports on their one-day course aimed specifically at Series 5 beginners



You've just acquired your first Psion? Be prepared to spend hours or even days before you can use it to anything like its full potential. This may not be the case if you're already computer literate or an enthusiastic gadget user, but if you're neither of these and you haven't the time, patience and enthusiasm to study the manual, how about an introductory course? It may be just what you need.

I'm a 3a user, but when I first tried Psion's newest machine, the Series 5, I found several aspects so puzzling that I had to refer to the manual frequently. Whether yours is a 3a/3c or Series 5, there is a one-day course for you at Psion's headquarters, a short walk from Marble Arch in central London.

The Series 5 course programme includes explanations and practical help on the main System software, including the control panel, as well as demonstrations of the main applications built into the Series 5. If you're intimidated by the thought of OPL (Psion's built-in programming language), there's no need to be. This is an introductory course and OPL isn't even mentioned—it's considered suitable only for advanced users.

Small groups only

A problem with planning a course on anything relating to computers is in finding a suitable level to match the individual experiences and knowledge of the attendees. There were six of us on the day I was there. We all had a Series 5 in our possession, and we had all used either a Series 3 or a desktop PC before.

The course instructor was Rob Edwards, Psion's Training Manager. He has been with the company for some years and

A relaxed atmosphere with small groups of no more than six people per course

even worked in Technical Support, (see 'Rainy Days and Mondays' on page 47), so has had considerable experience in dealing with users' problems.

A friendly atmosphere

He quickly struck up a friendly relationship with the class and began by briefly assessing students' requirements. Two said they wanted to be able to use AGENDA more effectively, some were having problems with file management, two had difficulties with printers linked to a Series 5. Another one wanted help with PsiWin and one person didn't understand backing-up procedures.

It seemed right to assume no basic knowledge so Rob began by explaining the meaning of 'file' and 'folder' and took us through the file management procedures, i.e. opening, saving, moving, deleting, etc. "Having a computer does not make you an organised person. If your papers and your life in general are disorganised, so will your computer be..." was a message that came through to emphasise that we should all try to keep our files and folders in order.

The lecture room was spacious and well-fitted out. Rob used Psion software on a desktop PC connected to a projector so that we could all see a big-screen image of the Series 5 screen. And of course we each had our own Series 5 to repeat the procedures as they were being demonstrated.

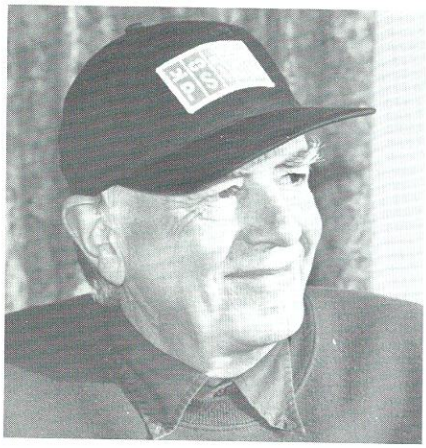
Rob Edwards, Training Manager, giving some personal attention

The atmosphere throughout the day was not that of a formal lecture but an informal get-together with an expert. At any time a student could ask for help (and most of us did), whereupon Rob would either repeat his explanation or give painstaking and personal attention to the student.

Lunch too

At lunchtime there was a break of an hour during which we were able, if we wished, to leave the building and take the short walk into Oxford Street for shopping. But for those who stayed there was a large plate of sandwiches with a variety of fillings, and we were able to make tea or coffee in a small kitchen adjoining the lecture room.

After lunch we moved on to the various applications. WORD, SHEET, DATA, AGENDA, SKETCH, the calculator and sound recording were all explained in a practical way so that towards the end of the afternoon we all felt able to use these programs. We also experimented with the infrared transfer of files to each other. Finally at the end of the afternoon there was an open session when Rob encouraged us to raise any questions or problem regarding the use of our Psions.

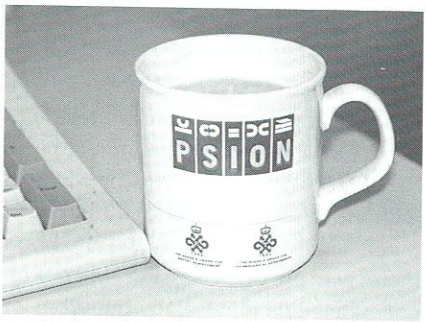


Brian Read, complete with Psion cap!

Each participant was provided with a 35-page photocopied Training Guide to the Series 5. This is less formal than the official manual and in some ways better illustrated, with clearer and fuller explanations of file management and the various applications.

Souvenirs!

When the students arrived, coffee or tea was offered in attractive mugs, printed with the Psion logo. There were immediate enquiries about buying these, but unfortunately none were available for sale—a missed sales opportunity, Psion! Still, all students were presented with a Psion cap instead, as shown opposite...



And finally, a mug shot...

To sum up

This one-day course can be recommended for a raw beginner (like myself) who needs an introduction to the Series 5, or to anyone who needs practical help on getting the most out of their machine. It was as thorough as one could expect in a small class lasting just over five hours, particularly as there was also time for individual help.

I was a little surprised that Psion didn't include the attachment to a small printer during the demonstrations, but it may be that this was considered beyond the scope of what is advertised an 'An Introduction...' To see a printer in use would open the eyes of Psion newcomers to the joys of portable printing on the move.

All the Psion courses are limited to six people per session, and are held at Psion's UK headquarters in Red Place, London.

The cost of £90 (£60 for Psion Gold Support members, all including VAT) includes refreshments and the training guide to take away.

The FIVE zone

A look at the latest developments in the Series 5 world

by Steve Clack
& Steve Litchfield

With the product's initial teething troubles now largely exorcised (see The FIVE zone in issue 15), the Series 5 is enjoying some real success and critical acclaim. Almost every mainstream PC magazine to have featured comparative PDA tests has hailed the Series 5 as top dog amongst them all, be they Windows CE, Apple Newtons, USR PalmPilots, Casios, Sharps or whatever. The keyboard always seems to attract the most raves, but the software has gained a lot of positive feedback too.

With the second generation of Windows CE machines just about to make an appearance in the UK, there's certainly a wave of stiffer competition on the horizon. The last crop of CE machines were little match for the Series 5, with the resource-hungry Microsoft operating system showing its lack of pedigree on a palm-sized computer. We'll take a brief look at the new CE 2 machines as they appear, and examine how they compare to Psion's flagship.

Getting flash

Following on from our discussion of non-Psion CompactFlash cards in the last Five Zone, we've recently been trying out cards from another manufacturer, SanDisk. Interestingly, all Psion's own-branded cards are made by SanDisk—it says so on the cards themselves. As you would expect, the SanDisk CFs perform just like the Psion ones, but at a much reduced price. With all this competition Psion are really going to have to drop their own prices before they lose all the market share to SanDisk, Simple Technology and all the other manufacturers likely to appear over the coming months.

A noteworthy point concerning the SanDisk cards is that they all come with a free PC card adaptor. This means that as well as being compatible with the Series 5 they will also fit into any standard type II PC (PCMCIA) card slot used by CE machines, the Geofox One, etc. Users of other CF disks can still use the adaptor, which is available separately at around £12.

More Software

With the Series 5's ever-expanding software base it becomes more established as a serious business tool. The recent appearance of the Microsoft PowerPoint-like *Presentation Maker* almost rounds off the main suite of business applications—now all we need is a reasonable choice of bank account management packages, a heavy-duty database program and a more sophisticated file manager. The underlying EPOC32 operating system has built-in support for some fairly slick database functionality, and the first company to market with something to exploit this wizardry should do very well with it.

A season of change

As reported in Issue 15, Psion had to make quite a few software changes for the v1.01 ROM, debuting in the shops in October last year. What's not quite as well known is that they've also tweaked the design of the hardware in recent months.

A spate of cracked hinge mountings had two low-profile effects. Firstly, Series 5 users worldwide were unofficially implored to be gentle with their palmtops. Nothing, apparently, causes a hinge to break down quicker than treating a Series 5 like a spectacle case. It's really just common sense, and you should make sure you open and close *your* expensive Psion with at least a little respect. It's a fact that any palmtop gets far harsher treatment than most laptop computers, and is more likely to be accidentally knocked off a desk, dropped out of a jacket pocket or otherwise bounced around. It's a rare thing for someone to sit on their laptop or have their two year old child chew on

the corner of it, but the same can't be said of a Psion.

All Series 5s sold from last September onwards have had 'unpainted' keyboard surrounds. The black plastic on early models was additionally *painted* black as well as being moulded in black plastic in the first place, leading to flaking of the paint at the first opportunity. Along with a more robust general paint finish on the remainder of the machine, the change to raw plastic on the keyboard surround should ensure that paint exodus is a thing of the past.

The second invisible 'upgrade' was that Psion changed the design of the hinge pins to a more 'flat-ended' design, with greater clearance round the pin circumference.

A third and final sign that your Psion 5 is a recent unit is that the stylus tip has been re-manufactured to remedy the occasional broken or stuck pen. The silver sleeve has been shortened so that there's now five millimetres of black plastic exposed instead of two.

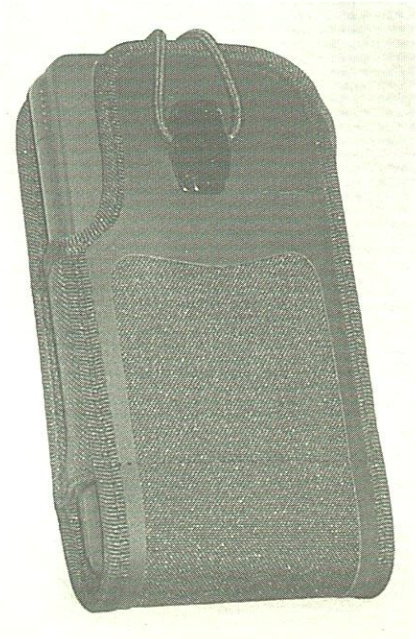
It's good to see that Psion, contrary to criticism from certain quarters, *do* take notice of hardware failures and use them to point the way to more reliable designs.

Should it touch?

A number of Series 5 users have complained that the if you lie your machine on a flat surface the rounded protrusion below the spacebar doesn't touch down. Don't worry—this is the way it was designed. It's not intended to be a keyboard rest, but just something to rest your thumb on when opening the case. The overhanging part of the keyboard does deflect just a little if you press the spacebar hard, but by less than a millimetre.

A good case

It's good to see a diverse range of carrying cases appearing for the Series 5 at last. Covertec have recently introduced a dedicated S5 version of their excellent Cordura model. The new case is the usual belt mounting design, with a clip fastener at the top to stop the



machine jumping out. The quick-release belt clip is as beautifully made as the stitched Cordura case itself, and there's even a cutout so that you can use the sound recording keys in situ.

The Covertec case is available at around £24 from major Psion dealers, or direct from Exportech, the UK Importers of these French-made units (see page 108 for details).

Another great looking Psion-pouch is the US-made Rhino Pak, as shown on page 7. We have yet to see these in the flesh, but will be putting one to the test in the next issue.

On your desk...

For the Series 5 user with everything, Widget Software (tel: 01438 815444) are now selling a desk stand to keep your little computer above that pile of desktop clutter.

The black finished sheet metal pressing tilts the computer forwards at a slight angle, which some people may find more convenient. Personally I have an aversion to extra bits of hardware unless they're really necessary, and I found that the desk stand tilted my Series 5 too high, making the already angled screen even harder to read. The stand sells for £19.95 including VAT.

And in the car

If you want to join the high-tech motoring fraternity, Widget Software have also just announced a car stand for the Series 5. Comprising a rather basic sheet metal 'cradle' and a semi-flexible metal arm (about 30cm long), you can fix the stand into your dashboard and rig it up so you can read the Psion screen while driving.

The two main drawbacks are firstly that the arm has to be drilled into your dash-board with the three *wood screws* provided (ouch!), and secondly that if the police catch you using your Psion while driving, your fine is likely to be the equivalent of a couple of large CompactFlash disks.

I'm sure that the manufacturers only intended the stand to be used while stationary or sitting in the passenger seat, but in that case it's probably just as easy to hold the machine in two hands instead.

The stand is priced at £69.95 including VAT.

The sound machine

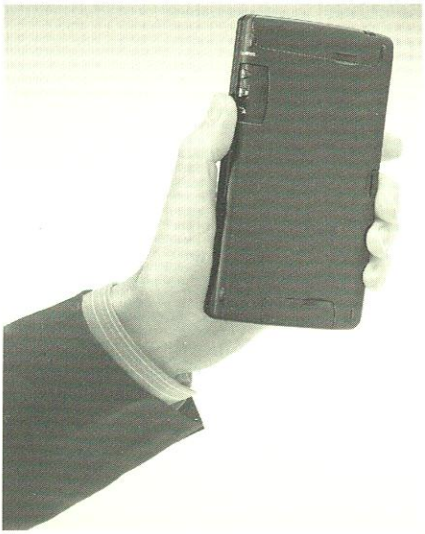
Sound recording has been transformed from a largely superfluous gimmick on the Series 3 range to a genuinely worthwhile addition to the Series 5's many capabilitlies. Steve Clack looks at what's changed

With the notable exception of David Joyce's clever Memovoc-3 'dictaphone' software (reviewed in issue 9), nobody ever tried to do anything useful with the Series 3 sound facility. Without Memovoc you couldn't easily record voice notes with it, and with each second of sound occupying over 8 kilobytes of space, any recordings would fill up your memory in no time at all.

More space to work in

The Series 5 is a different beast altogether when it comes to recording sound. Uncompressed sounds still take up about half a megabyte per minute, but with 4MB or 8MB of standard RAM there's a lot more to go around. With CompactFlash cards now available in sizes up to 32MB (and rising), you can store more than an hour's worth of speech (or music) onto a single disk, though it's still hardly the most economical recording media!

The Series 5 also gives the option of using ADPCM compression when recording (choose 'Compress sound...'



from the 'Tools' menu), which squeezes in twice as much for your money. The disadvantage is that the recording quality is reduced a little, but for dictated voice notes it is usually quite acceptable.

Using the compression feature can also slow down the search and editing facilities, but again this doesn't tend to be a problem.

A virtual tape recorder

Apart from having the space to store more sound clips, the Series 5 hardware is now far better designed for taking voice notes. The built-in microphone and record, rewind and playback buttons on the side of the machine mean that you can now use the '5' just like a conventional tape recorder. Whenever you press the record button the Series 5 beeps at you, jumps into the RECORD application and starts recording.

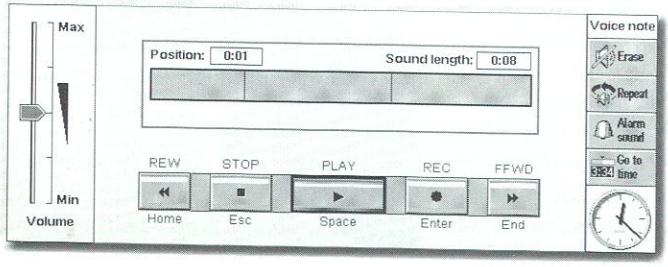
As shown in the screen shot below, each 'clip' you record is neatly appended to the previous ones. When you get back to your desk you can use the built-in editing tools to selectively play back each part of your original voice notes.

Typing notes

What some Series 5 users may have missed is that being a multi-tasking machine, you can easily play back and transcribe your notes *at the same time*—the SOUND application doesn't have to be on screen to do it. Just go into WORD (or wherever you want the notes to appear), then reach under the front of the machine and press the square 'rewind' button. Then press 'play' and type in your notes as they play back. Unless you're a fast typist or a slow talker you'll have to play it back more than once to get everything down, but this works well for short, quick-fire notes you took down while driving to work or running for a bus.

Use it!

So, if you've ignored the S5 SOUND application up until now, this is the time to give it a try, and start getting the most from yet another great Series 5 feature.



Some voice notes, clearly showing the three separate parts of the original 'dictation'

The FOX's Den

The first of our new regular feature especially for owners of the first Psion-compatible computer, the Geofox One

by Steve Clack

Welcome to the first in a new regular spot designed especially for Geofox One owners. If you've never heard of the Geofox One, it's actually the first ever 'Psion compatible', running the same underlying EPOC32 software as the Series 5, with the same built-in applications, plus a few more besides.

Growing on me...

As part of our coverage of the Geofox I'm in the process of giving the machine a long-term test, and will be reporting any interesting points or anomalies I come across from week to week. So far I've developed a real preference for the Geofox over the Series 5 when doing spreadsheet or word processing work, simply because every extra pixel of screen real estate makes life easier. I like to see as much text as possible when writing at a computer, because I find the process easier if I can see a few paragraphs of surrounding text.

Likewise with a spreadsheet, it makes more sense when you can see your data in the context of a decent chunk of the whole thing, rather than just a few surrounding cells. Taken to the extreme, I remember the old spreadsheet program for the Psion Organiser II. It showed two lines of 16 characters at a time, and although the number crunching capabilities of the program were quite good, the frustration of having such a tiny window onto your data made the process too agonising for words.

The lack of a touch-sensitive layer means that the screen is considerably less reflective than the Series 5's, and the contrast is better too. The absence of pen input would be a real pain for anyone who relies heavily on it (especially someone who uses the SKETCH application a lot), but I tend to use the keyboard most of the time and so can live without it. The Glidepoint mousepad isn't actually *so* bad once you get used to it—after all, most laptop computer users live with them quite happily.

Yes, the Geofox is really growing on me. My very first impressions (at which point I was comparing every aspect directly with the Series 5) were less favourable, and had I not persevered with it for a week or so I may never have discovered its strengths.

One review in the computer press pronounced the Geofox as a good machine, but claimed that the keyboard was poor. This totally baffles me, as although keyboard preferences are obviously a very personal thing, I find the Geofox keyboard far preferable to the Series 3a/3c, or to any of the Windows CE machines I have tried. It's certainly not up to the standard of the world-beating Series 5 keyboard, but balanced against the better Geofox screen I still prefer the 'Fox' for large amounts of text entry. The few quirks of the Geofox keyboard layout soon get forgotten after a few hours of intensive use, and although a bit fiddly I still prefer the Geofox's little numeric keypad for entering large quantities of numeric data.

The big beastie

Handling the bigger machine also gets easier with practice, and now I can hold it in two hands and type quite quickly,

even while standing up. If typing on my lap, I find it convenient to lay out the whole thing completely flat, and just rest it across my legs, almost like a paper notepad.

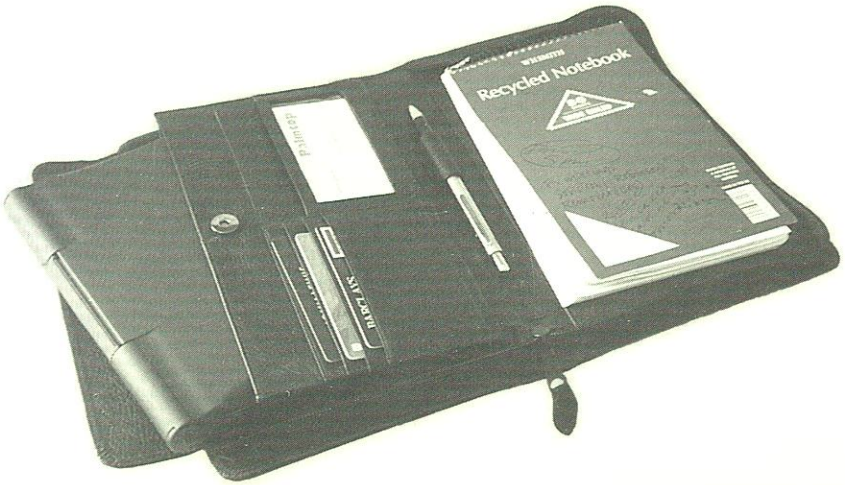
Keep it safe

While carrying a Geofox in your hand is quite acceptable, most people will keep theirs in a briefcase or handbag, and it's important to protect the computer as it rattles around. Geofox now offer two optional carrying cases on their price list.

The Leather Executive Carry Case (shown below) is pretty expensive at £66 including VAT, but offers lots of protection and can be used to carry much more than just the computer. Apart from a nicely oversized, magnetically latched pocket for the machine, there's a space for a journalist's notepad, pen, and six wallet-style pockets for business cards, credit cards, etc. There's also a pair of elasticated slots for spare batteries inside the main pocket, and the case closes with a strong zipper.

Don't buy this case if you want to keep your Geofox as portable as possible—it's around 26cm x 17cm x 4cm when closed and is quite a handful to carry. Having said that, the quality is really top-notch and it's certainly a stylish thing to carry around.

If you need protection but prefer to keep the already large Geofox a little less obtrusive, the simple Leather Slip Case is just large enough to fit the computer, but with no space for accessories. At £26 including VAT it's also much more affordable than the Executive Case, and is well made with a magnetic catch on the closure flap (see over page).



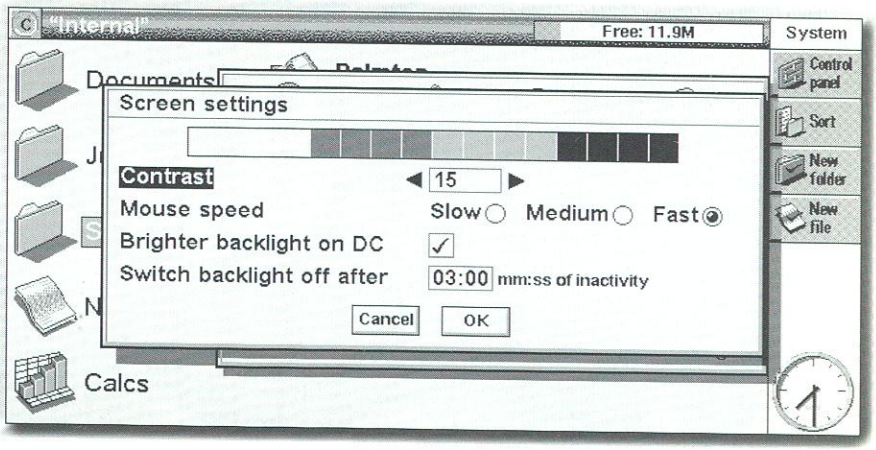
Turn up the light!

Anyone who purchased their Geofox without the optional 'Worldwide AC adaptor' will doubtless have noticed how the machine *eats* batteries with the backlight switched on (or with a PC card modem installed). With such a huge screen area it's hardly surprising, but nevertheless it can get expensive to run.

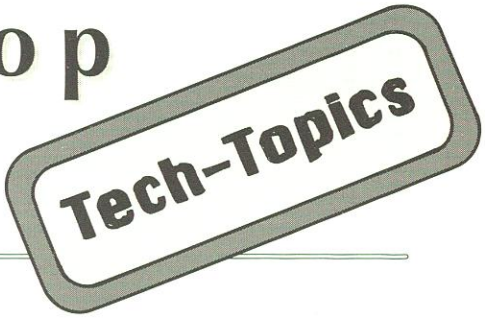
At £33 the mains adaptor is horribly expensive, but it includes plugs for UK, European and US sockets, so at least it'll work almost anywhere. A big bonus of using the adaptor in poor lighting conditions is that with it plugged in, the backlight glows much more brightly than when running on batteries. This is done to maximise battery life as far as possible.

If you plug in the adaptor and the light *doesn't* get any brighter, then open the Control Panel, go into the 'Screen' option, and turn on the misleadingly titled 'Brighter backlight on DC' option.

Also, from the same dialog, most people will find the Glidepoint easier to use with the 'Mouse speed' option set to 'Fast'. This makes the pointer more responsive and avoids endless dragging across the pad when traversing the screen.



Programmers' Workshop



by Leigh Edwards

I think a New Year warrants a new approach to the Programmers' Workshop. In future I'll be covering a wider range of technical topics instead of exclusively discussing programming issues. I'll return to specific programming subjects when requested or in the light of new developments.

When applied to computer processor power and memory capacity, Moore's law predicts that they will both double about every eighteen months, and looking at Psion products this holds approximately true. The Series 3a/3c machines have been around for about three years now. Series 5 takes the maximum memory from two megabytes to eight, the central processor from 16-bit to 32-bit and the 'number crunching' capacity up by a factor of at least *four*.

You may ask where this might eventually take us, and what will Psions of the future be capable of? How far away is a personal supercomputer, and even if that scale of computing capacity becomes available, how will the 'smarts' in the software keep up?

In the 1950s Artificial Intelligence (AI) researchers made some very bold statements about the likelihood of machines becoming intelligent. Their predictions were based on some success with certain types of problem, for example mathematical programs and intellectual games such as chess. With hindsight, the predictions appear optimistic or even foolish, and I believe they were extremely premature.

Moron crushes chess genius!

In the film '2001: A Space Odyssey', HAL (the ship's computer) was clearly intelligent and was very good at chess. In May 1997 Gary Kasparov, the undisputed world champion of chess, was beaten by *Deep Blue 2*, a machine built

and programmed by a team from IBM. However, this triumph of machine over man holds out little hope for believers in the ultimate succession of man by intelligent machines. For AI fans the sad truth is that *Deep Blue 2* is really just an idiot operating at warp factor 9.

At the highest levels, humans play chess by investigating only the most promising move sequences, and then they apply finely honed recognition of game patterns and strategically advantageous positions. Computers play chess, in the main, using brute force searching methods and are poor at recognising the long term, or strategic, value of positions. A chess Grandmaster may examine perhaps 30-50 positions from the vast number of possible moves, whereas *Deep Blue 2* may examine fifty *billion* or more.

Looking further into what makes the IBM machine tick reveals that the prospects of applying such enormous computing power to the very general task of machine intelligence are very bleak. In order to evaluate 200 million positions per second, *Deep Blue 2* has 32 parallel processors, each equipped with 6 to 8 accelerator chips *custom made* for chess pattern recognition. But here's the really sad part: *Deep Blue 2* cannot learn from experience, and it has no appreciation at all about the nature or purpose of the game of chess. It is now well recognised that computer chess is a poor indicator of developments in machine intelligence.

The keepers of the faith

Believers in the possibility of AI fall into two broad schools of thought. Some believe that machine intelligence will emerge spontaneously when the scale of processing power, the complexity of the algorithms employed and the amount of data available reach some critical level—based upon the reasoning that human intelligence only emerged when our brains became sufficiently large and sophisticated. Conversely, others are firmly of the belief that intelligence depends upon some special mechanisms at work in the brain. Building intelligent machines will rely upon being able to understand and emulate those mechanisms.

Algorithms and insight

The vast majority of today's applications, and certainly all of the software running on Psion machines, are based on well-established programming techniques. Complex tasks are broken down into a hierarchy of procedures and algorithms. However, humans commonly solve problems using non-algorithmic methods. For example, ask any numerate person if the process of adding 1 to any positive number (to result in a new number 1 larger than the previous number) can be continued without limit. They will say 'yes of course'. I challenge anyone to write an algorithm that can draw the same conclusion—the fact is that it is impossible. The brute force approach is bound

to fail by exceeding the numerical limit of any machine used. Any other approach will be forced to employ an artificial limit that relies upon a decision statement of the sort 'if the number is greater than x say the proposition is proved '. Humans can see the 'truth' of certain conditions by a mechanism or process that we are not yet able to explain, and certainly are not able to define in mathematical or algorithmic terms. Without this type of non-algorithmic insight human mathematics and science could not have developed to their current levels.

So, if we can't define the solution to certain types of problems using algorithms, will we ever build machines that can rival or exceed human abilities?

Modelling from life

How is it possible to produce smart or even intelligent systems/software so complex that the human brain can't define the methods of operation?

One approach could be to produce software with clearly defined objectives, that stores data which determines its exact operating characteristics. Allow the program to alter the data and hence modify its operating methods, by trial and error, until those objectives are being met as optimally as possible. In fact, the data and software already exists and the process is long established: it is called evolution by natural selection and the data is held as genes in DNA. Software following the same principles, using so-called 'genetic algorithms', is now being developed and refined to tackle a wide range of difficult problems. One great advantage of evolution within a computer environment is that life/reproduction/death cycles can be very rapid. Therefore the emergence of algorithms more suited to the survival criteria (as determined by the human operators) can occur very quickly.

When one person recognises the face of another it's hard to imagine the brain going through a series of clearly defined steps that result in recognition. It happens so quickly and we know the brain can be so slow at other tasks that it seems unlikely that remembering a face is a purely algorithmic process. If the visual system or other complex pattern recognition processes, such as remembering a voice, were based on algorithms then how come they usually happen at lightning speed? It's now well established that a key structural feature of the human brain is the huge numbers of connections between individual brain cells forming vast neural networks. It is probably the parallel and network nature of the brain that allows areas such as the visual cortex to process and recall images such as faces so efficiently. Here it seems very likely that facial recognition is non-algorithmic, and hence can occur so rapidly and deal reliably with a wide range of very variable and uncertain information. But as humans we are also well aware that we are prone to mistakes, which is an unfortunate but accepted part of life.

We are far less tolerant of uncertainty or error rates from computer systems. Computer-based artificial neural networks are now becoming widely used to process information where only 'fuzzy' or poorly defined data is available, and users of such systems are having to get used to the concept of uncertainty in their output. It is therefore likely that very complex and sophisticated systems in the future will rely on techniques such as artificial neural networks and genetic algorithms. In all probability the system architects will not fully understand the inner workings of their own systems. Once such systems are used to develop future generations then they will cease to be within human comprehension.

Keep things in context

In Psions and most other computer systems, applications work largely independently of each other. Most data files are unrelated to each other, i.e. information is not linked or held in context. As humans we depend heavily upon our experience, and in particular on our memories. Even more important is our ability to use our memories and knowledge in the appropriate context. Consider the following sentence and why you are easily able to make sense of it:

"John called the waiter over to his table and asked for the bill."

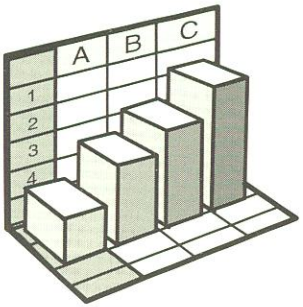
For example you could reasonably conclude that: John is away from his home or place of work, he is probably in a café or restaurant, he is unlikely to be alone and he and his companions have almost certainly just had something to eat and/or drink, he/they have been there for some time, the restaurant is owed money for the food, etc. and he/they are likely to leave soon after the bill is settled.

This illustrates why a program analysing the example sentence would have very little chance of being able to derive the same level of information without access to a huge store of contextual information. A lifetime of experience, memories and a brain that automatically creates linkages as a matter of course allows you to derive so much more information and probably correct assumptions from the limited data presented, all without any real effort.

Hot heads, greedy chips

With present technology, serious processing output requires serious power input. This is also true of the human brain: its operation typically consumes 30% of our total daily calorie intake. When Psion Computers used the ARM chip in the Series 5 some people criticised them for not using the much faster and more powerful StrongArm. It was considerations such as dramatically shortened battery life that effectively made the decision for them. The power consumption problem must be overcome before anything like HAL can become your constant companion.

Working with SHEET



A series aimed at the relative beginner to the Psion's built-in programs—the fifth part of our tutorial designed primarily for 3a/3c/Siena users

by Steve Clack

After learning the principles behind spreadsheet calculations in the last issue, we'll go on to present the same data in graphical form.

Instant information

Graphs are a great way to present data in a way that gives the reader a summary of the numbers at a glance. Of course you can't usually read off the exact figures from a graph, but that's not the intention. Let's take the column of months and figures that have been used to illustrate our examples over the past few issues (see opposite), and assume that they represent expenditure on, say, telephone calls over a one year period. By glancing at the numbers for a couple

E1

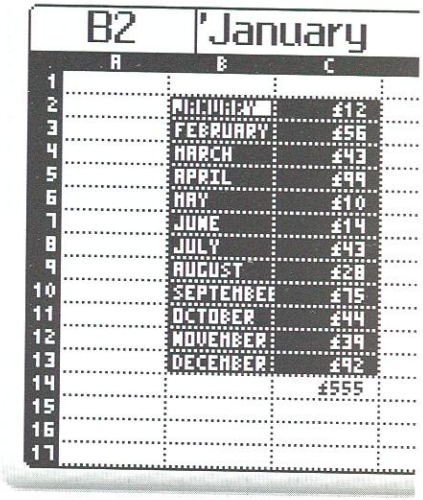
	A	B	C
1			
2		JANUARY	£12
3		FEBRUARY	£56
4		MARCH	£43
5		APRIL	£99
6		MAY	£10
7		JUNE	£14
8		JULY	£43
9		AUGUST	£28
10		SEPTEMBER	£75
11		OCTOBER	£44
12		NOVEMBER	£39
13		DECEMBER	£92
14			£555
15			
16			
17			

of seconds it's difficult to get a good feel for what's happening month by month. Conversely, if we create a graph of the same information it's very easy to see any trends. This is the beauty of graphs. They complement the numeric data to help give the full picture in the shortest possible time.

Simple graphs

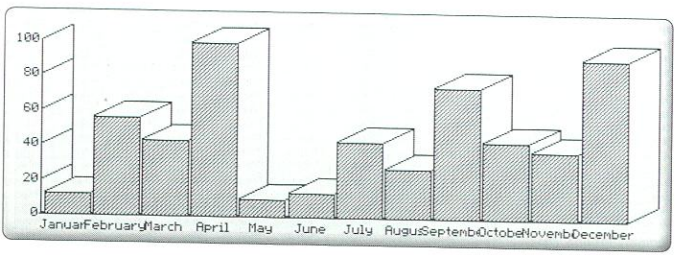
Creating a simple graph from the above data takes just a few seconds once you know how—here's the procedure:

- Move the cursor to the first item of data to be included in the graph. In this case we'll include the month names as well as the figures so that it's easy to see exactly which month every part of the graph relates to.
- With the cursor on this top left cell, in our case 'B2', the next step is to highlight the entire range. Following the instructions from earlier in the tutorial, hold down the <Shift> key and hit the right arrow key once. Then keeping the <Shift> key down, press the down arrow enough times to highlight the whole block of numbers (excluding the total that we previously created at the bottom).



See the screen shot above. Note that we've used <Psion><Z> to zoom the data so you can see it all at once. You don't *have* to do this, as the cells will just scroll down as you highlight them.

- With these cells highlighted, press the diamond key and the default graph type will pop up, as if by magic. You can see from the graph below that the figures for each month are shown by solid bars, with the height representing each amount. The value of each number can be estimated by looking across



A simple 3-D bar graph, at the touch of a button

to the scale on the left hand side of the graph. This is called a 'bar graph', 'bar chart', or a 'histogram'.

From just a second's glance at the graph we can see several things: that the total of our telephone calls over the middle portion of the year (May to August) cost less than most of the months at the beginning and end. Also that April was an expensive month, as was December—perhaps because we were calling friends over the Christmas holidays.

Tidying up

With the basic information presented on screen there are a number of ways we can tidy up our basic graph.

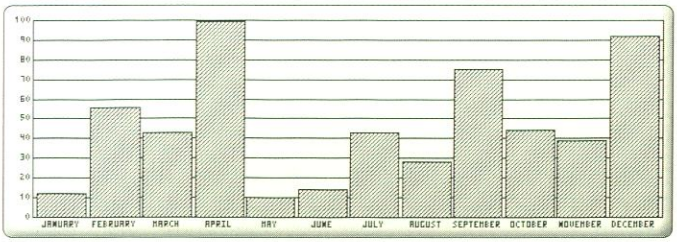
It would be easier to estimate the value of each bar if we added some horizontal grid lines extending from the scale on the left. Also we'll remove the 3-dimensional effect on the bars, which may look clearer with the grid lines in place. Part of the month names are getting chopped off by their adjacent neighbours, so we'll make the text font smaller too. To set these options go to the 'Display' menu and select 'Format'. Set the '3D', 'Font size' and 'Horizontal grid' options as shown below, and press the <Enter> key to accept the changes.

Set graph format	
·Type	Bar
·3D	No
·Font size	Small
·Horizontal grid	← Yes →
·Vertical grid	No
Pie labels	

Of course, we could just as easily have pressed the diamond key to go back into the main spreadsheet and shorten the month names instead, and then still used the slightly larger typeface which was easier to read.

Don't lose it!

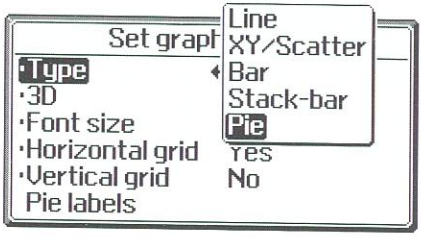
If you go straight back into the spreadsheet and deselect the highlighted cells you will lose your graph! To save your graph from oblivion press <Psion><E> to select 'Rename graph' from the 'Graphs' menu, and give it a name. In this way you can create several graphs for the same spreadsheet, and select the one you want from the 'Use graph' option under the same menu.

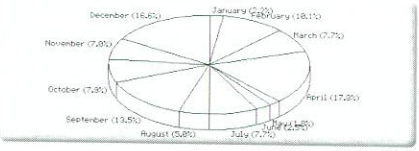


The same graph, after a few optional tidying operations—with the text looking a bit tiny...

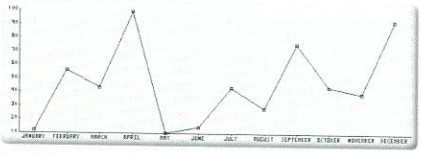
As you like it

There are five different graph types available in SHEET, so feel free to experiment to find which type looks best for your particular kind of data.





The same data in a 3D pie chart



...And in a simple line graph

In fact, experimentation is really the key to mastering graphs. Try using the 'Titles' option under the 'Display' menu to add one or two title lines at the top of your graph, to explain what it contains. Or use 'Axis titles' under the same menu to annotate the horizontal and vertical scales. In this way you can label the horizontal scale as 'Months in 1998', and the vertical one as 'Telephone costs in Pounds'. When adding axis titles, note that 'X-axis' always refers to the horizontal scale and 'Y-axis' to the vertical.

Getting clever

There are several more complex options available when creating graphs, and by selecting additional columns of data in your spreadsheet before pressing the diamond key you can even graph several groups of data at once. These will be superimposed on the same graph, *provided that you use an appropriate graph type*, such is 'Line' or 'Stack-bar'. Again, you'll need to either experiment or consult your User Guide to get to grips with all the options. Just be aware that certain graph types simply don't work with inappropriate data.

Printing

The bad news is that with the Series 3 range there is no easy way to print out your lovely graphs. There's an option to 'Create PIC file' under the 'Special' menu, but this isn't a standard Psion PIC graphic—it's a format used by spreadsheets such as Lotus 123. You may be able to import and read this format on your PC, but the only way to print from a Psion is to use a drawing package that supports direct printing (see our group test back in issue 3) to save a screen shot of the graph, and then print it directly.

Next time we'll look at some more advanced features to really extent your spreadsheeting skills.

"On The Net"

The latest gossip from Psion's online community

Once again, Pete Sipple delves into the world of Psion 'net chatter to see what's new. This time around, we look at screen savers with a difference, memory loss, hot and cold contrast, tricky cases and expiring backlights.

Lights out?

Don't leave your backlight on... Is it true that your backlight has only 29 days of life left? Is the end nigh?

"I have recently spoken to guy who was told by Psion that the backlight function for the Series 5 was meant to work only for about 700 hours! After this, the backlight would go dead! Can anyone confirm this? To me, it sounds just unbelievable!" *(sky@nospam.de)*

"I believe that the backlight has a 'halflife' of about that time, i.e. it loses half of its brightness after this period." *(jeff.johnstone@ukonline.co.uk)*

"This is wrong! The backlight on the Psion 5 is using the same technology as the 'Backlight Watch', so as long as the backlight plate is not damaged, it will still work." *(ccp@netvigator.com)*

"Do you think that 700+ hours for a backlight on a wristwatch is not going to be enough? You aren't likely to use the backlight for more than a few seconds at a time and no more than a couple of times a day, that should be plenty. I believe that the backlight on the Psion and other machines has a halflife of a few thousand hours." *(Newsmaster@pwomar.demon.co.uk)*

"It sounds about right. All backlights using this (electro-luminescence?) technology have a limited lifespan, as does the tungsten filament lamp in the headlights of your car. As do all electronic components—they all have a quoted MTBF (mean time between failure) supplied by the manufacturer. Let's work it out—say you use your backlight for 1 hour a night, 5 nights a week. That is 260 hours, thus your backlight would last 2.7 years. Would you still be using your Series 5 after 2.7 years?" *(jochen.siegenthaler@alcatel.ch)*

"Sorry, but I disagree entirely. There is no way that the backlight has a life of only 700 hours. Certainly I have never heard of backlights giving out on any machine, including non-Psion ones. Many people use the backlight all the time their machine is plugged into the mains. So, by my calculations, that gives me about 6-9 months. Excuse me, but I don't think Psion would let a machine out that only has a nine month lifespan. I certainly do not intend to replace my machine within this time period and if it does give out on me (even if it lasts for over a year—out of guarantee), I will be claiming a replacement machine. So, considering that this is the case, Psion are either going to have to provide a hell of a lot of extra machines or they are going to get themselves into a bit of a difficult situation!" *(robert.wigley@btinternet.com)*

"To put this in context, the official life expectancy for an Apple Newton screen is 1000 hours. After that, however, rather than completely give up it is supposed to fade. The general rule then, is don't use your backlight for no reason." *(j.forrest@co.umist.ac.uk)*

"My GOD! This means my Psion backlight will only last 35 YEARS at the rate I use it! The sky is falling..." *(treaves@neo.lrun.com)*

Free memory for all?

A message proclaiming a free memory upgrade looked a little too good to be true, and indeed it was. However a very useful tip has come to light...

"Free Psion 5 Memory Upgrade! Well almost. I just did a reset on my Psion (a pen in the reset hole) and got back 500K! A colleague here has just done the same and achieved similar results. The machines had been used for about 6 weeks without a reset. Well chuffed." *(philg@cix.co.uk)*

"It is well known that doing this frees up memory—I think Message Suite is a major culprit. After reading the Series 5 FAQ, I recently did a soft reset, after running the Psion 5 for 6 months without a crash, and freed up 1.5 megabytes!!" *(squinn@cix.co.uk)*

We'll be covering memory issues such as this in an aricle in issue 17 - Ed.

Open sesame

A new user posed this question, revealing a few ways of gaining access to your keyboard. How do you open yours?

"OK, it has to have been asked before, but has anyone got the hang of opening the S5 one handed, or even in two hands comfortably (i.e. without the feeling that it might jump across the room). Opens wonderfully on a table, but I can't get a reasonable grip when just standing up and opening it in my hands, the keyboard tends to hit my fingers. Maybe I should have taken piano lessons to be able to span the full

width of the machine and grip it that way." *(rjc@cstr.ed.ac.uk)*

"Easy when you know how. Try this: take the machine in your right hand (assuming you are right handed), making sure it is lengthways so you can get your fingers round it. Have the base on the palm of you hand so that your thumb is in line with the front bit (where there is a thumb rest on the keyboard—the enlarged bit). Now with your other hand flip open the lid, whilst controlling the opening speed with your thumb (that you should have on the thumb rest). It does take a bit of practice, but once you get to grips with it (no pun intended) it should be as easy as opening the Series 3 machines!" *(robert.wigley@btinternet.com)*

"I have an even easier way. Assuming you're right handed, hold your left hand out in front of you, flat with the palm up. Place the Psion on your left palm with the front facing you. Your fingers should splay out from the back of the Psion, where the main battery compartment is. Now grip the shelf behind the screen lid with your left fingers. Place your right fingers on top of the screen lid, where the Psion logo is, and your right thumb on the thumb rest between the keyboard and screen at the front. Lift with your right thumb, *et voila*. Describing that is a lot more complicated than actually doing it, and it's by far the easiest way I've found to open it." *(chris.brown@arm.com)*

"I open my S5 with my thumb on the keyboard, too, but not gripping it. Place it in your left hand vertically, keyboard to left with your thumb against the wide part (the thumb rest), then lift the screen as if you were opening a book, with your right hand. Your left hand thumb isn't gripping the keyboard, just controlling the speed with which it comes out. I close it 'like a book' too, in a similar way." *(ben@wuli.demon.co.uk)*

"Nope, I can't manage this. Must be for experts only. If I grip something I'm pressing in. If I'm pressing in it won't come out unless I'm pushing somewhere else harder. I don't feel comfortable pressing somewhere else harder, putting more stress on the machine, just to oppose my own thumb. This is going to be one of those things like people who could open a cigarette packet, get it out, light a match and light up all in one hand, isn't it?" *(rjc@cstr.ed.ac.uk)*

Grinding grit

Just how much damage can a tiny bit of grit on the end of your stylus do to your screen? New screen protectors could be the answer to a scratch-free Psion...

"Today I have seen a fine, thin scratch on my S5 screen. My Psion is now two weeks old and I was very careful when using the pen. Anyone had the same experience?" *(martin.ascherl@gmx.de)*

"It only takes a tiny bit of grit to become trapped between screen and stylus for this to happen. I'm going to get some

WriteRight screen protectors as soon as they come back into stock over here, to make sure that it doesn't happen to mine. You could do the same." *(robert.wigley@btinternet.com)*

"If you have not tried the screen protectors, don't. They are impossible to put on without air bubbles and/or marks on the adhesive. And if you do get them on, it is sort of like looking through a layer of Vaseline. I have found that a good stylus helps a lot. Got one from PdaPanache (www.pdapanache.com) and it is a softer material than the one that comes with the Psion. I have made a habit of running it across my trouser leg while twirling it a little to make sure there is nothing on it before I use it. It is retractable so that helps keep it clean as well." *(brock@wws.net)*

"After my first attempt at installing the screen protector I would wholeheartedly agree. Bubbles all over the place and he is right, it was like looking through Vaseline. I ripped off the screen protector and a few days later tried another one. This time I applied it with just my fingers (no credit card as they suggest). You must go very slow, but it worked much better. It was bubble free but it was still like looking through Vaseline. The amazing part is that an hour later the visibility improved greatly, three hours later the visibility was excellent. Mind you not as good as just the naked screen, but very visible. So now I'm pretty happy with them, and don't worry about dragging the pen all over the screen. Another benefit is that you can use your fingers on the screen and there are no finger prints, don't ask me how—it just is. Another note, I do the same thing Jeff does, I always run my stylus across my shirt sleeve." *(fvc@ix.netcom.com)*

Crazy contrast

Ever noticed that when you switch your machine on the contrast wasn't as you left it? Seems that the Series 5 screens are heat sensitive...

"Has anyone else found that the screen contrast on the Series 5 varies with temperature? If it has been in my pocket and is warm, the screen is very dark and I have to adjust the contrast. Likewise, if it has been left out in a cold room the screen is very light." *(tom.pedersen@virgin.net)*

"That's normal for all LCD screens in my experience." *(zab01@usa.net)*

"I live in Ohio. You should have seen it after I left it in my car overnight. It got down to 24 Fahrenheit and it turned pure white." *(ruff.4@ix.netcom.com)*

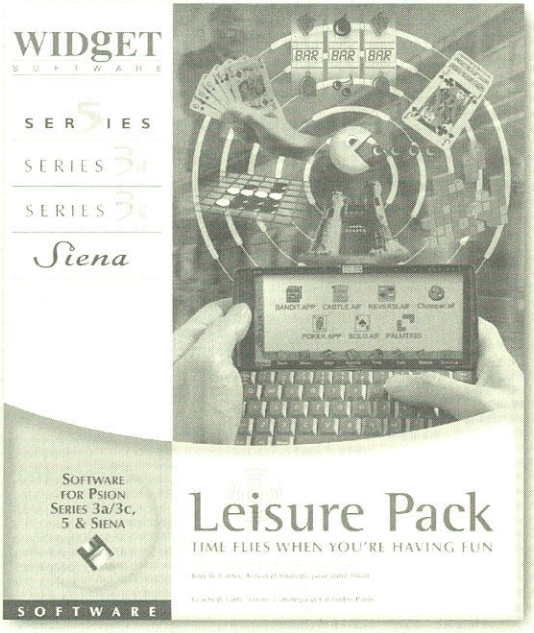
"I live in Australia. Mine went all black!" *(sean@tsm.com.au)*

Psion related discussions take place in several Usenet newsgroups including comp.sys.psion.misc, as well as the Psion conference on CiX, the Psion area on AOL, and the Psion forum on CompuServe.

Pete Sipple

WIN a copy of Leisure Pack!

Just answer the following questions relating to the contents of this issue, and mail your answers to the usual *Palmtop* address. One correct entry picked out at random on 20th March will receive the prize. If you don't want Leisure Pack (reviewed on page 30 of this issue) then you can choose another prize of equivalent value from our special selection.



Question 1 - How many calls did Psion Technical Support take last year?

Question 2 - Which Psion employee appears in at least *4* photos in this issue?

Question 3 - What is the name of the advanced sound compression technique used on the Series 5?

Last issue's competition winner was Graham Miller of Hubberts Bridge, Lincolnshire

The competition answers were: 4MB or 16MB, Watchdog, and EPOC World

Hints & Tips

***Every* item published in this section wins a FREE *Palmtop* tee shirt!**

Efficient AGENDAs

Most of us keep details of birthdays and anniversaries in AGENDA as a matter of course. For me, the real purpose of doing so is to act as a reminder to do something like buy a present or card, or organise a party. To do this, I need advance warning of the event so I can organise whatever it is I have to do.

The most efficient way I have found is to create a To-Do List in AGENDA called 'Reminders', in which I keep all reminders for each birthday and anniversary. Each entry in this list is given a Priority of 1, so that it will appear in all views of AGENDA. It has 'Dated' set to Yes, the 'Due Date' set to that of the birthday or anniversary, the 'Date Details' set to 14 days warning, with 'Show due date as' set to 'days'. Having done this I then select 'Repeat entry' from the menu and set this to 'Yearly' (for reasons which will become clear in a moment).

The result of all this is that 14 days before each birthday and anniversary a reminder appears in the Day View of AGENDA, displaying the actual number of days before the event. If I don't get around to the task on that day then AGENDA automatically carries it forward to the next day—this time showing *13* days before the event, and so on. Once I've bought the card or gift I put the cursor on the entry in Day View and press <Delete>.

Because it's a repeat entry, a dialog box comes up asking if the deletion is for 'This occurrence' or 'All occurrences' and I select 'This Occurrence'. This removes the entry from Day View but keeps the event in your 'Reminder' To-Do list for next year.

P Cooper, Bedford

Easy dates, etc.

SHEET forces you to enter dates in the form '=date(xx,xx,xx)' if you subsequently wish to perform calculations on them. If you just want to enter a date *without* making calculations on it you can do so by just inserting an apostrophe (') or a space, and then the date

in the usual way, (e.g. <space> 25/12/97). This is much more convenient than typing '=date(xx,xx,xx)', and then having to FORMAT it as 'date'.

The same technique also allows you to enter text that begins with a number, which would otherwise result in an 'illegal character' message.

A Reeves
Selby, North Yorkshire

Fast tabbing and more...

I have discovered two key combinations for the Series 3a/3c that perform the same function as the <Alt><Tab> task switching command used in Microsoft Windows. Just press <Shift><System> to go through all open programs in one sequence, or <Psion><Shift><System> to go in the opposite direction.

Matthew Jeffries
Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire

A pound stretching case

While shopping in my local High Street recently I discovered a cassette carry case in *Poundstretcher* for only £1.99. By carefully removing all but two of the plastic dividers it makes an ideal case for a Cyclone floppy drive and power supply, using the remaining dividers to partition the drive from the AC adaptor.

Neil McMullen, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Simple Jotter on a 3a

There are software alternatives to the lack of a 3c-style 'jotter' on the 3a, but there is a simpler option. Just set up a new database file with the first line labelled 'Heading' and the second line as 'Text'. Now take notes to your heart's content—you can even save the file as 'Jotter' if you wish. This solution has the advantage that it doesn't take up any extra memory to run, which is a major boon for those with 256K machines.

Ewan Spence
Cowdenbeath, Fife

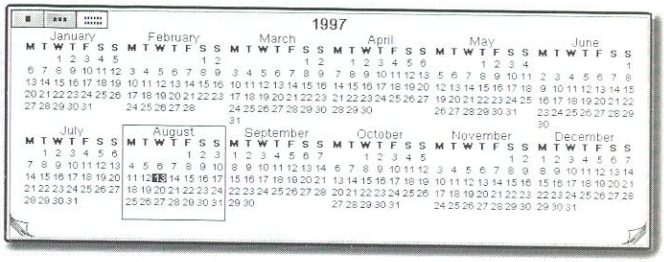
Fast disk switching

Series 5 pen input may be faster on some occasions, but don't forget that most commands also have keyboard equivalents. Instead of tapping on the top or bottom left corner of the screen every time you need to switch between the internal memory and your CF disk, just press <Ctrl><Q> instead. This also serves as a general 'mode change' button in most applications, changing from spreadsheet to graph mode in SHEET, card view to list view in DATA and so on.

Terry Dwight
Streatham, London

Fast track calendar

Don't forget that on a Series 5 a full 12 month calendar is never more than four

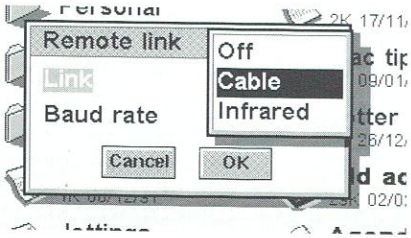


Fast access to an on-screen calendar

keypresses away. Just press the 'Agenda' softkey to go into the AGENDA, then the first press of the <Tab> key will bring up a calendar showing the current month, and second press will bring up a three month view, and a third press will show a whole year to view.

This is handy if someone wants to set a date for a meeting and you need to find out what day of the week a certain day falls on. Don't forget that as soon as you press <Enter> you will jump straight to the date highlighted by the cursor, so you can enter any necessary details right away.

Ken Butcher
Preston, Lancashire



Battery saver or time waster?

Battery saver?

Although some parties recommend that you turn off the Series 5 remote link from the 'Tools' menu while not using it, it actually increases power consumption by no more than a few percent. Unless you're determined to save every last drop of power then it's probably not worth the trouble to repeatedly switch it on and off.

Frank Dell
Bath, Avon

Bigger SHEET sorts

When using the Series 3a/3c 'Sort' function to do a large alphanumeric sort in SHEET, perhaps for a book index or catalogue, you may get an 'out of memory' message. This is because by default the program keeps a copy of what you are sorting in an 'undo buffer' within RAM, just in case you change your mind and want to undo the sort.

You can at least double the amount of data you can sort by going into 'Preferences' and setting the 'Keep undo buffer' to 'No'. Of course you won't

then be able to undo a sort, so be quite sure that you want to do it!

Mike Ball
Cressage, Near Shrewsbury

Ultimate S5 security

With Series 5 CF disks getting cheaper all the time, some users may wish to take data security to a new level by storing *everything* on CompactFlash, leaving the Series 5 internal RAM purely for working memory when running programs.

CF disks are even more secure than the Series 5's internal RAM, and are completely immune to system crashes.

This method also has the advantage that if ever your Series 5 breaks down you can simply pop out the CF, with 100% of your data intact.

John Lynch
Ipswich, Suffolk

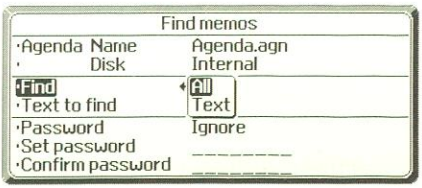
Q&A

Q How can I access memos in the Series 3a/3c AGENDA application without having to keep a separate memo file just to list them all?

A Shann
Rye, East Sussex

A **There is no built-in facility to do this, but help is at hand. An excellent freeware program, *MemoFind,* (reviewed in issue 3) allows you to search for any word or phrase within your memos and present a list of all those that contain the search text. It can then jump directly to selected entries, prompting you for passwords as required.**

MemoFind is an essential utility for all 3a/3c users, and the most recent version is available via the *Palmtop* web site, the issue 16 shareware disk (see page 111) or in the utilities section of the latest *Palmtop* CD.



MemoFind—an essential utility

Murgan's Musings

Stephen Murgan looks at bloatware reminisces on the bygone days of efficient software, and talks about Series 3 hinges...

Over the past few years there has been a tendency for software to get fatter with each passing generation.

Only a few years ago you could fit an entire DOS-based application onto a single 720K floppy disk. Now most PC office applications come on CD-ROM and require tens or even hundreds of megabytes of hard disk space.

What is surprising is that we still do the same tasks as we did in those days, in the same way, and at roughly the same speed. So what has changed?

Perhaps the most pervasive changes have been due to operating systems. Graphical systems such as Windows, and Macintosh have placed several extra layers of software between the user and the hardware. This, along with a move away from the more efficient programming languages (such as C and assembler) and a 'me-too' race to have all of the features of competing products (regardless of how useful they may be) have made the computer prettier and easier to use, but slower. So we were strongly encouraged to run out and buy faster computers to run newer (and flabbier) applications.

Some of us have been through this cycle several times.

So common has the problem become that the industry has coined a term for it: *Bloatware*.

It's not just applications that have this problem. Games have turned into multimedia extravaganzas, full of texture-mapping and even full-motion video-clips, featuring actors who range from good to awful. The industry has coined a phrase for this, too. They call it 'eye candy', and too many games have more emphasis on this than on gameplay.

It's been a long time since I played a game and thought 'How did they do

that?' I remember *Elite*, the space game that featured combat, trading, docking with rotating space stations (shades of *2001: A Space Odyssey*) and bounty hunting on hundreds of planets in eight galaxies. The original version, made for the BBC model B computer, featured vector graphics, came on a single 360K floppy disk and ran in only 27K of RAM.

Carrier Command put you in charge of an assault carrier with aircraft and assault tanks at your command. As well as flying, fighting and piloting the ship, you were tasked with building up a supply network and managing resources while capturing hostile islands and dealing with the enemy carrier. It used EGA filled-polygon graphics, fitted on a single low-density disk that was only about half-full, and ran happily in less than 512K of RAM.

I have a PC at home. I run Windows 95, OS/2 Warp 4 and Windows 3.1. My main word processor is Word 2. Yes, an old one—vintage 1994. I feel no inclination to upgrade to the latest version. Why not? Because I don't need to.

One would have thought that someone who makes their living in computers would have the latest-and-greatest of everything, but in fact the opposite is true. Many in the industry are comfortable with battle-tested tools that they know well, and have no need to change them. To quote the phrase, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. The marketing departments of the software giants, of course, would have you believe otherwise.

It's interesting to observe the reaction of people when they find out that my 3a has 2MB of RAM. Some say "That's an awful lot of memory for an organizer". Others say "Is that all?" Either way they can't believe it when you show them all the stuff that is packed in there. As an experiment, I opened a file and typed in 'Hello world' in several different programs, then looked at the sizes of the files produced.

Notepad (ASCII)	11 bytes
Psion WORD	698 bytes
Word 2	1697 bytes
Ami Pro 3	4488 bytes

The Psion machines are one of the last bastions of efficient and tightly-coded programs and data. One recent example I encountered was a shareware chess program with a footprint of less than 35K of storage and 52K of memory when running. A typical PC chess program needs more than that just to store its book of opening moves.

There are some truly excellent Psion games and utilities to be had for comparatively paltry sums of money, and the programs are tightly coded and efficient. In a world that is consistently being sold the 'bigger-is-better' idea, it's nice to know that there are still *some* small and efficient programs out there.

A hinge of contention

Over the past months there has been a lot of discussion about the hinges of the Series 3 machines. Much of it has been

wildly maligning, and there have been accusations of poor workmanship and design levelled at Psion.

What normally happens is that the plastic area around one of the hinges cracks. This can happen after only a few weeks or after several years. Hinge breakage can also occur if one of the hinge pins becomes loose and gets caught on the button bar as the case is being opened. Either way, the end result is the same: a sharp crack, and a broken Psion.

Psion have been quick—a little too quick, according to some—to point out that this is often due to abuse, and to be fair, some of the machines that arrive at their repairs department look like they have been run over by a truck. For this reason they often ask to see the unit before they decide whether to repair to under warranty.

In my case, the machine was 18 months old when the hinge broke. Since it was out of warranty, they quoted me a price of $60—quite reasonable, I thought.

Incidentally, I have heard of others who have been charged differing amounts. It would be nice if Psion were to have an official pricing structure to make it easier for people to see what the cost of repairs would be and to help ensure consistency.

Anyway, they returned the machine, which I sold a few months later. As far as I know, it is still happily running.

As a result of this experience, I learned a lot about hinges. Some people have described Psion's hinges as a design fault. Personally, I disagree. If you open up a Psion, place it on a desk and then stand on it (don't try this at home, folks), something will break, and that something will probably be the hinges.

It may be truer to say that the hinges are the weakest point in the case, and that may seem like a bad thing, but think about it—which would you rather have to replace, a case, a screen or a motherboard? At least a Psion with a broken hinge is still usable. The best analogy that I can come up with at short notice is that of a crumple zone on a motor car.

When you stop and think about it, the average Psion takes a far worse beating than an average laptop. They've been dropped down stairs, catapulted from moving vehicles, used as a prop for Audi and Lada boot lids (hello Tony), sat on, trodden on and generally bashed around.

In closing, I would like to pass on some advice that I heard from a Psion technician. Aside from sitting on them, the commonest way to break the hinges is to allow the lid to 'flip' open and 'snap' shut. Over time the stress will weaken the area around the hinges. Using a small amount of care when opening and closing the machine should help to prevent hinge breakage.

"Let's be careful out there..."

The Psion Reference

If you would like to be included in this ever-expanding directory then please send details directly to *Palmtop* for free inclusion. If your entry is incomplete or incorrect then please update us!

Discussion Groups

UseNet Groups

comp.sys.psion.announce
comp.sys.psion.misc
comp.sys.psion.comm
comp.sys.psion.apps
comp.sys.psion.programmer
comp.sys.psion.marketplace
comp.sys.psion.reviews

CompuServe Psion discussion	GO PSION
CiX Psion conference	JOIN PSION
AOL - Psion Noticeboard	Psion/General noticeboard - Keyword: Psion
Series 5 mailing list	Fill in form on *www.pinkworks.com/pda/s5list.html*

Psion Software

New World Technology FTP Site	*ftp://ftp.nwt.com/*
Cityscape Psion Archive	*ftp://ftp.cityscape.co.uk/pub/psion/*
Usenet Binary Group	*comp.binaries.psion*

CompuServe	GO PSION
CiX	JOIN PSION, then look in '/files' and 'Series 5_files' file lists

Psion FAQ

The Frequently Asked Questions document contains useful information, facts, names, addresses and numbers:

Posted monthly to the *comp.sys.psion.announce* newsgroup.

Available for FTP download from *news.answers* FTP sites, including rtfm.mit.edu/pub/usenet/news.answers/psion-faq/

An online version can be accessed from: http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/faq.htm

Available by e-mail. Send an e-mail message to mail-server@rtfm.mit.edu with a message containing the lines "send usenet/news.answers/psion-faq/*" to receive all parts or send a message containing "help" and "index" for more information.

World Wide Web sites

Psion PLC	*www.psion.com*
Psion Software	*www.software.psion.com*
Palmtop magazine	*www.palmtop.co.uk*
3-Lib shareware	*www.3-lib.co.uk*
Total S5!	*ady.net/psion/*
Softbase Series 5 information	*www.softbase.co.uk/psion/*

Do you live in the Geneva area?

Do you live in the Geneva region? If so, then you are kindly invited to local Psion club meetings which are held on the first wednesday of each month in Onex (suburb of Geneva), Switzerland, at 20 o'clock in the Maison Onesienne (13 rue des Evaux). For more details, please email Daniel Pfund at: *webmaster@planet-pfund.com* or contact directly the club's president:

Andre Robert, phone: 079 415 00 65

The Software Directory

Machine key: 3=Series 3, a=Series 3a, c=Series 3c, s=Siena, 5=Series 5/Geofox One

Please note that this section has been completely revised and almost doubled in size since the last issue.

'Issue' denotes which issue(s) of Palmtop contains reviews or material on each product.

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
Business					
5Time	Time logger	5	Simon Berridge		$20
Act!	Contact manager	a/c	Widget	4,5	£90
BusCalc	Business calculations (ROAE etc)	a/c	Chris Nicholson		£12
Colleague	Phone contact manager	a/c/s	Ad Bosch		Free
Contact!	Contact Manager	5	Tim Richardson		£20
Contact Edge	Contact Manager	a/c	Ad Bosch	5,10	Free
Contact Log	Contact Logger/Organiser	a/c	Paul Law	14	£12
Decide	Decision analysis utility	a/c	Dave Catlin		£10
Facsman	Facilities Management	a/c/s	Gary Bainbridge	11	£15
Invoice Manager	Invoice allocations and construction in HTML	5	Marc de Oliveira		£5
Linkwise	Connect to Novell GroupWise	a/c/s	Advansys		A$99.50
Log-It!	Time and task logger	a/c	Mark Esposito		$29
Plan	Project Manager	a/c/s/5	Andy Clarkson	4	£15
Presentation Maker	Slide-show creator	5	Psion	15	??
ProPoc	Project Manager	a/c	Berthold Daum	7	A$99
Psi-Tact	Contact Manager	a/c/s	Tony Crocker	11,14	up to £15
Relate	Contact Manager	a/c/s	Ad Bosch		Free
RepPoc	Mailing list/Reporting aid	a/c	Berthold Daum		A$59
SaleTrax	Contacts Manager	a/c	Chris Nicholson		£12
TimeBase6	Time and Task planner	a/c	Widget	11	£50
TimePlan	Time and Task planner	5	Paul Law	15	£10
VacTrac	Vacation Planner	a/c	Ronald Queloz		Free
WorkLog	Time logger	a/c	Richard Schmidt		Free
Communications Software					
CixEd	Off-line-reader for CIX	5	Steve Litchfield		£15
Faxit	Fax sender	a/c	Walter Wright	15	£14
FreeVT	VT100 terminal emulator	a/c	Nils Faerber		Free
JBCIS	Addon to ReadCIS	a/c	Compuserve PSION forum	9,10	Free
Messaging Suite	Email and web browsing	5	Psion PLC	15	Free
NFSC	VT100 emulator and UNIX-Comms	a/c	R. Koenig		Free
Psion Dialer	Data add-on for travelers	3/a/c/s	Protronics USA		$25
PsiMail Internet	Email and web browsing	a/c	Psion PLC	7,10	£60
ReadCIS	Compuserve off-line access package	a/c	Compuserve PSION forum	1,7	$25/£16
ReadCIX	CIX comms package	a/c	CiX ReadCIX conference	1,2	Free
SIU Fax	Fax receive on S3a	a/c	Exportech	15	£34
Swapper	Use multiple Message Suite accounts	5	Richard Stafford		£5
Termit	VT100 terminal emulator	a/c/s	Serge Shestopalov		£15

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
Conversion Packages					
Conversion Calculator	Conversion Package	a/c/s/5	Timothy Bentinck	10	£10
Convert	Conversion Package	3/a/c	Paul Synott	10	£8
Convert5(/Pro)	Conversion Package	5	Mayur Shah		£12
Convert 2.1	Conversion Package	a/c	Tom Nemec	10	$10
Convert 2	Conversion Package	a/c	Jon Duff	10	£10
Converti	Conversion Package	a/c/5	Guillaume Dupont		£8
Toolkit 1	Conversion, File Manager and other utilities	a/c	Purple Software	3,4,10	£40
Database Applications					
3Base	Psion-PC database convertor	PC/Windows/a/c	Palmtop BV		Free
DataImp (PBVideo)	Video/Music/Photo etc	a/c	Patrick Bell	6	£15
DataView (/Pro)	Database lister/browser/printer	a/c	Purple Software	2,5	£50?
DataDeLuxe	Database Application	a/c	Pocket & Soul	2	£50
JBData	Database browser/searcher	a/c	John Boyce	2,4,6	Free
Pages Generator	Corporate database compression	a/c	Mobile Software	5,16	£100
File Managers					
3T	Simple File Manager	a/c/s/5	Roger Muggleton	10	Free
File Manager	Part of Toolkit 1	3/a/c/s	Purple Software	3,4,5	£40
Filer	File Manager	a/c	Tom Nemec	8	$30
JBTree	File Manager	a/c/s	John Boyce	4	Free
QV5	File browser and viewer	5	Roger Muggleton		Free
RShell	File manager	a/c	Konstantin Saliy	12	$25
SnFile/X3Tree	File Manager	s	Richard Wakelin	10	£10
Synchro	Files synchronization	a/c	Jean-Philippe Pasquier		$10
Graphics Packages					
Draw	Painting package	a/c	S Litchfield/Rick Andrews	3,8,10,12	£12
DrawIt/FloChart/OrgChart	Vector drawing package	a/c	Purple Software	1,3	£40
Icon Draw	Paint icons	a/c	Jon Duff		£10
MBMView	Sketch and MBM picture browser/viewer	5	Lieuwe de Vries	15	Free
Paint & Compose	Painting and Music composition	a/c	Widget Software	3	£40
Palmtop Picasso	Painting package	a/c	Ken Willan	3	£15
Photo5	Bitmap manipulation package	5	Mat Ripley		$20
PicPoc	Painting package	a/c	Berthold Daum		A$50
S3ADraw/SnaDraw	Icon/Picture Editor	a/c/s	Alan Richey		$15
Vector	Vector/CAD drawing	a/c	Nick Matthews		£15
Finance Packages					
ABP	Bank account management	5	Malcolm Bryant		Free
Bank/BankPlus	Accounts Package	3/a/c/s/5	Pete Sipple	4,8,9,11,12	£5 to £8
Banker	Accounts Package	a/c	Pelican Software		£60
BILL 1.O	Calculates Bills	a/c/s	Tom McGaw		£6
DP Bank	Accounts Package	a/c	Daniel Pfund	8,10,12	£10
EasyBank/EasyExpense	Spreadsheet-based accounts suite	a/c/s	Phil Rosengarten		??
Expense Tracker	Expenses manager	a/c	Psion	10	£30
Finance Pack	Accounts Package	a/c	Widget Software	8	£50
Financial Advisor	Mortgage/Pension Calc	3/a/c/s	Gary Perlmutter	12	£7
Financial Calculator	Assorted financial calculations	5	Palmtop BV		??
Interest 1.0	Interest calculator	s	Thomas McGaw		£2

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
Porfolio	Investments manager	a/c/5	Guillaume Dupont		$30
PriCalc	Stock Control and Mark-up/down calculator	a/c	Chris Nicholson		£20
Psion Money	Accounts Package	a/c	Psion plc	8	£50
S3ABank/S5Bank/SnaBank	Accounts Package	a/c/s/5	Alan Richey	4,8,9,11	$30
S3AExpenses/SnaExpenses	Expense Account Tracker	a/c/s	Alan Richey		$15
S3AFuel/SnaFuel/S5Fuel	Fuel Consumption Monitor	a/c/s/5	Alan Richey		$10
S3AHome/SnaHome/S5...	Home Inventory	a/c/s/5	Alan Richey		$10
S3AInvest/SnaInvest	Investment tracker	a/c/s	Alan Richey	8	$10
S3APlanner/SnaPlanner	Budget Planner	a/c/s	Alan Richey		$10
Shark A Tax	Tax assessment spreadsheet	a/c/s	Shark A Tax	13	£20
Xpenses/5Xpense	Expenses manager	a/c/5	Simon Berridge		$10

General Utilities

Agenda Dump	Agenda reporting tool	a/c	Simon Pooley		Free
Alarm Enhancer	Better alarm control	a/c/s	Alan Clifford		£5
Alerts	Alert manager	a/c	Max Bisschop		Free
BusyView	Agenda Monthly View	a/c/s	Lieuwe de Vries	10	$25
CallCalc	Telephone call coster	a/c/5	Mark Avey		$15
DPSwitch	Task switcher (elimates need for Button bar)	a/c	Daniel Pfund		Free
Desktop utilities plus	Utility shell and system desktop	5	Paul Law		£12
EasyNote	Jotter	5	Paul Law		£10
Encrypt-It	File encryption tool	5	Peter Csutora		??
GBattery	Battery Monitor	a/c	Max Bisschop	6	Free
Geoclock/SolarMap	World Daylight Map	a/c/5	John Davies	15	Free
HotKeys	Task cycler and shortcut package	5	Henry Hirst	15	£10
JB Active	Application Manager	a/c	John Boyce	11	Free
JB Backup	Backup Utility	a/c	John Boyce		Free
JB Dupes	Eliminates duplicate files	a/c	John Boyce	12	Free
JB Eyecon	Picture browser and viewer	a/c	John Boyce		Free
JB Find	File and file contents locator	a/c	John Boyce		Free
JB Launch	Launchpad for applications	a/c	John Boyce	6	Free
JB ResetM	Recover lost memory	a/c	John Boyce	11	Free
JB Sort	Database sorting	a/c	John Boyce		Free
JWIN	Information/utilities/conversions	a/c/s/5	Phil Spencer	10,15	£7
KbdMap	Keyboard remapper	3/a/c/s	Konstantin Saliy	8	DM40
LaunchPad	Application launcher	a/c/s	Phil Spencer	13	£5
MemoFind	Agenda Addon	a/c	FTP sites	3	Free
MemoPad	Jotter utility	a/c	Tristan Bonsall	12	£6.50
MonthVu	Agenda Addon	a/c/s	Steuart Dewar		??
P-Info	Machine information	a/c	Alex Wilbur		$26
Psi-Sync	Synchronises MS Outlook 97 with Agenda	a/c/s	Brian Cadge		$26
PassApps	Agenda/Data password protection	a/c/s	Phil Spencer	8,9	£5
PsiZip	Archiving/dearchiving software	a/c/s/5	Serge Shestopalov	12	£15
Quick Alarm	Quick activation of predefined alarms	a/c/s	Brendan W. Breede		Free
Quick Note	Jotter	a/c/s	CE Steuart Dewar	5,6	$??
RPNCalc	Reverse Polish calculations	5	Derek Johnston		£10
S3A Task/S5 Task	Extended Task Manager	a/c/5	Alan Richey		$15
S3ACalc	Numeric keypad overlay/calculator application	a/c	John Crook	6	£12
S5 Note	Jotter	5	Alan Richey		£7
Siena Plus Pack	Utilities and more	s	Steve Litchfield	13	Free
Sleeper	Backlight controller	c	Mark Esposito	10	$18
Stationery Pad	Templating document manager	5	John McAleely		Free

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
Stopwatch	Stopwatch	5	Dirk Roennau		Free
Stopwatch	10mS resolution Stopwatch	a/c	Simon Pooley		Free
Stopwatch!	Basic stopwatch	a/c	K McLoughlin		Free
TaskSwitcher	Windows-like task switcher	3/a/c/s	Jean-Phillipe Reynauld		$10
ThesLink	Hotkeyed entry into Thesaurus	5	Henry Hirst	15	Free
TimeMan	Time-related (and other) utilities	a/c	Phil Spencer	8,14	£10
Tone Pad	DTMF dialer/timer	a/c	Simon Pooley		Free
Toolkit 2	System and archiving tools	a/c	Purple Software	10	£40
Unzip	ZIP file decompressor	a/c/s	Jochen Siegenthaler	7	Free
Xapps	Password protection for Data and Agenda	a	Mark Esposito	Free	
HTML-related tools					
Websurf	Offline HTML browser	a/c	Arnaud Weil	7,8	£12
HTMLView	Offline HTML browser	a/c/s	Micro Cheng		$30
'Power On' Utilities					
BackLite Plus	Backlight control and other utilities	5	Jason Kneen		£10
Inteliscrn	Backlight and contrast controller	5	Gareth Alldread		Free
JB Jump	Jumps to any given application on power-on	a/c	John Boyce		Free
Pason	Control of password on startup	a/c	Andrew Lord		Free
PsiOn	Password utility	a/c/s	Paul Hargreaves		£6
Macro Software					
ExAb	Macro set for expanding common abbreviations	a/c/5	Huub Linthorst	12	Free
F11	Document macro aids	a/c	Berthold Daum		A$20
KMAC	Macro Software	a/c	FTP sites		Free
MACSYS	Macro Software system	a/c	Tom Dolbilin	3,12	Free
SwitchTask	Macro system and task switcher	5	Pascal Nicholas		Free
Miscellaneous applications					
Agenda Companion 1998	Notable dates add-on	a/c/5	On-Board-Info Ltd	11,15	£12.95
Allegro	Handwriting recognition	5	Purple Software	15	£50
Calc3a	Scientific calculator and equation solver	a/c	Richard Schmidt	6,10	Free
Dart3a	Darts scoring system	a/c	Patrick Wildenborg		£6
Fit4Life	Health and Fitness	a/c/s	Steve Litchfield	9	Free
Flying Utilities	Pilots calculations	5	Chris Parker		Free
Geni	Family tree browser	a/c	Martin N Dunstan	10	£15
GolfCard	Golf database	a/c/s	M-P(Golf)Systems		£25
Graph3a	Graph plotter	a/c	Gareth Wild	12	£8
Grapher	Function plotter and equation solver	5	Jamie Shotton		Free
KallCost	Phone call timer	3/a/c	Widget Software		??
Kgene	Genealogy package	a/c	Kevin Groves		Free
Lottery 1.0	Lottery Program	s	Tom McGaw		Free
Lotto3a	Lottery graphical analyser	a/c	Patrick Bell	6	£12
MemoVoc	Voice memo manager	a/c	David Joyce	6,9	£20
M5 Logger	Mileage logger	5	Mark Riley	15	Free
MedMate	Medic's assistant, calculations etc.	a/c	David Henshaw		£15
My Car	Fuel Consumption	a/c/5	Ad Bosch	11	Free
Notepad (Deluxe)	Notepad / project utilities	a/c	Purple Software	5-7,10,15	£60
PocDoc	Medical aids for personal use	a/c	Berthold Daum	4	??
PUR	PowerUp Memos	a/c	Brendan W. Breede		$20
QCD-Read	Quick-CAD graphics file viewer	a/c/s	Kevin Millican		Free

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
Reader	Text reader	a/c/s	Barry Childress	4,7,8,12	$30
RUS	Really Useful Stopwatch	a/c	Kevin Millican	15	£5
Saikan	Japanese character (kanji) dictionary	a/c	Jamie Packer		Free
Shoplist	Shoppling List assistant	a/c	Hugh Matthews	8,9	£10
Statistics	Stats and other calculations	5	Peter Csutora		$15
S3A Collect	Book/video collection Manager	a/c/s	Alan Richey		$10
Sound Master	Digital sound effects utilities	a/c/5	Palmtop BV	3	£25
TimeVoc	Speaking the time in the night	a/c	David Joyce		$15
Topix	Outliner	a/c	Uwe Kallemeyer		??
Ultimate Siena	Lottery and Cheque programs	s	Tom McGaw		Free
WardRound	Doctor's assistant	a/c	Shane McKee		£15
Weight and Balance	Aviation utility	a/c	Graham Taylor		£15

Music-related applications					
Chord	Guitarist's chordbook	a/c	Graham Brand		£10
Music Box	Tuner/metronome/piano and other tools	a/c	John Neale		£10
Piano	Playable piano and metronome	5	Steve Litchfield		Free
Piano Helper	Tuner/metronome/piano and other tools	a/c	Tim Kerber		$10

Reference applications					
AA World Travel Comp'n	Travel Information	3/a/c/s/5	On-Board Info Ltd		£30
Berlitz Phrasebook	Multi language phrasebook	a/c/5	Psion	15	£40
Collins dictionaries	Two-way hypertext language dictionaries	5	Palmtop BV		£40
LifeGuide	Bible-based guide to life	3/a/c/s	Steve Litchfield		Free
Procyon Light/X	Astronomy/Planetarium	a/c/5	Van Can/Sussenbach	14	Free/£20
Polaris	Astronomy / sky chart	a/c	Achay Doan		$15
The Portable Chef	1000s of assorted recipes	5	Palmtop BV		TBA
Trivia	Trivia and other handy information	5	Steve Litchfield		Free
UK Pocket Directory	'Yellow Pages'-style information	5	Steve Litchfield/Stefan Smith	15	£10
Business Almanac	World information in hypertext form	a/c	On-Board-Info Ltd	11	£20

Mapping					
AutoRoute Express	Route planning	a/c	Psion plc	4,5,14	£65
En Route	Route planning for Europe or USA	a/c/5	Palmtop BV	14	various
GeoDis	General mapping	a/c	Rolf Aeschbacher	14	£15
Geographical Database	UK Road Atlas	a/c	Keith Hollis	14	£34
Globecs3	3D globe of the earth	a/c	Andras Cserhati		Free
GPS AutoRoute	GPS add-on for AutoRoute	a/c	Mike Rudin	14	Free
GPS Mapping	GPS reader	a/c	Simon Taylor		Free
MetroRER	Paris railway routefinder	a/c	Hervé Gouraud	14	FF150
Psi-Mapper/GB	Geographical Information System	a/c/s/5	Steve Litchfield	4,7-10,14	£14
Psi-Mapper/Ireland	Geographical Information System	a/c/5	Steve Litchfield	11,14	£9
Psi-Mapper/France	Geographical Information System	a/c	Steve Litchfield	11,14	£14
Psi-Mapper/London	Geographical Information System	a/c/5	Steve Litchfield	4,6,14	£14
Nicholson London Pages	London information	a/c	Mobile Software	9,14	£19.95
Psigar	GPS utilities	a/c	Jonathan Duff	14	£10
Subway	London Underground routefinder	a/c/s	Tat Tang	10,14	Free
Tube 3a	London Underground routefinder	a/c/s	Simon Webb	6,14	£31.90
W2	World Map	3/a/c/s	John McAleely	11	Free

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
Programmers' Tools					
AKA	Also-Known-As OPL obfuscator and compactor	a/c/s/DOS	Ferret Information Systems	£20	
CleanOPL	OPL code tidier	a/c	Marcel Uithoof	10	Free
OPP/OPPDBG	OPL preprocessor and debugger	a/c	Andy Clarkson	10	£10
SafeOPL	RevTran protector	a/c	Richard Smedley	15	Free
S5Event	OPL/32 example framework	5	Alan Richey		Free

Missed you?

Have we missed any of your products from this listing? If so, then either send the details to the Editor (see contact details on page 1), or preferably use the special online update form on our World Wide Web site to submit or update your entry.

Lost or stolen Psion?

It your Psion computer has been lost or stolen then you may be interested to know that a UK user has set up an independent worldwide service to keep track of the serial numbers of such machines. Here is the WWW address of the registry (which shows descriptions and serial numbers only—all personal information is kept offline):

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/groucho/

If you do not have WWW access then you can send details by post, or send an SAE for a printed list of missing machines. Please send your name, address, telephone number, description of item lost or stolen and serial number(s)

Address to send to is:

Mark Avey
39 Union Street
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 2JN

An introduction to SHAREWARE

On the pages of *Palmtop* you'll read a lot about '*shareware*'. With the introduction of the Siena and now the Series 5 the shareware scene is getting much busier than before, but there are still many readers who've never taken the plunge into the vast archives of Psion software. In an effort to make Shareware more accessible, here is a quick guide to what's available, and how to get it...

What is shareware?

Written by professional programmers and enthusiasts to meet specific (and sometimes unusual) needs, shareware is normally supplied for use on a thirty day trial basis. If you like the software then you are expected to send a payment to the author. Each program comes with information on its use and cost.

Where do I get it?

- From the new *Palmtop* CD-ROM. See page 9 for further details of how to obtain this.
- Via a modem. This is the best option, as you have access to a range of other services too. With a modem, you can 'download' software to your desktop computer or direct onto your Psion machine. Where possible, look for a 28,800K (or higher) modem. If you 're new to the Internet, your best bet might be to connect via an Online Service such as *CompuServe*, *AOL* or *CiX* (in the UK) to get a feel for the way we communicate electronically. Many computer magazine cover disks contain the software you need. Connection via an *Internet Service Provider* brings a more direct connection, but can be difficult to set up. If you don't wish to sign up with a service provider, the alternative is to download files from a bulletin board.
- From the *3-lib* shareware library. Shareware is supplied on 3.5" PC disc or copied direct onto an SSD. See the advertisement section for details.
- From a PC-format CD ROM. Available from leading Psion dealers, these discs contain stacks of useful programs and utilities.

How do I use it?

You'll be able to obtain a list of what files are available from any of the above sources . Once you've found the file you want, there are four steps to take:

1. Obtain the files. See above.

2. Uncompress the files. Psion applications normally have more than one component (i.e. the program itself, help files and pictures). These are normally compressed into one file, which makes them easier to distribute. Shareware is most commonly compressed in 'Zip' format, and you can recognise these by the '.ZIP' at the end of the filename. Before you can install and run the program, you need to extract these files with an 'unzip' program. 'Unzippers' are freely available from your shareware supplier. If you use DOS, look for *PKZIP*, Windows 3.1/95 users can use *Winzip*, and Mac users should try *Zipit*. You can unzip files on your Psion without using another computer, using either *PsiZip* or *S3UNZIP*.

3. Copy the files. You now need to transfer the unzipped files onto your Psion (unless you're getting it on SSD). To do this you'll need some external hardware, such as:

- Serial Lead (*3Link*). Connect your Psion to a desktop machine or a modem.
- Cyclone drive. Connect a 3.5" floppy disc drive to your 3a, 3c or Siena.
- SSD RAM drive. Copy programs to a RAM SSD via your PC 's printer port.

Normally, one of the unzipped software files is a text file (i.e. README.TXT), which explains how the program should be installed and where the files need to be copied to on your Psion. Most 3a/3c software comes in the form of an 'application' file, and the .OPA or .APP file needs to live in the \APP\ directory.

4. Install the application. From your 3/3a/3c or Siena system screen, select <Psion><I>, and if the program was copied correctly the filename should appear in the list. Select it, press <Enter>, and your program should be installed and ready to run.

If there are any aspects of shareware that you think need more coverage then we'd like to hear from you. Please send your comments and suggestions to me, care of *Palmtop*.

Further reading

Shareware - What, Where & How - Page 43, Issue 6

Connecting your Series 3 - Page 41, Issue 5

Going on-line - Page 40, Issue 1

SSD Drive - Page 41, Issue 7

CD ROM - Page 20, Issue 7 ; Page 19, Issue 4

Cyclone - Page 14, Issue 7

PsiZip — Page 28, Issue 12

Get ALL the shareware featured in this issue on a floppy disk - see page 111

UK Pocket Directory 1.7

This is a huge UK-specific database. UK Pocket Directory gives access to information on Psion, general computer and Internet contacts, financial and adminstrative services, utilities (Gas, water, electricity etc), travel, tourism, rental and breakdown contacts, accommodation of all types, shopping & leisure contacts and services, attractions of all sorts and much, much more... Over 400KB of packed information!

Just think of a telephone yellow pages combined with hundreds of holiday brochures,dozens of roadside information leaflets, and all those info packs you get through the post from the people whose bills you pay. And now imagine all of that in a millimetre of silicon, sitting snugly in your Psion Series 5.That's what UK Pocket Directory is all about.

New Series 5 shareware from Steve Litchfield

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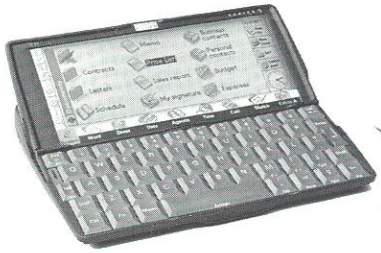

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PSION

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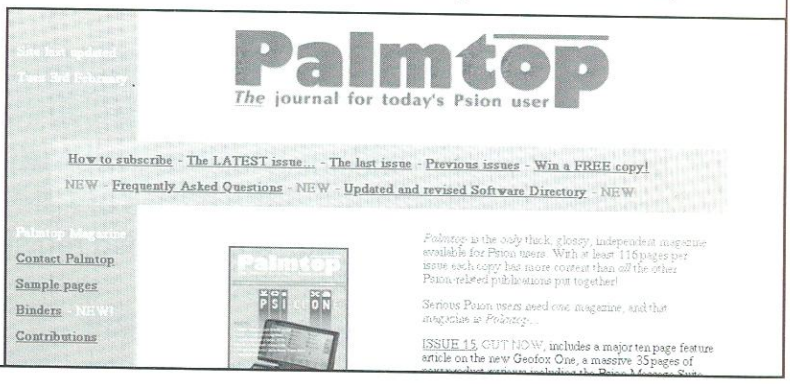
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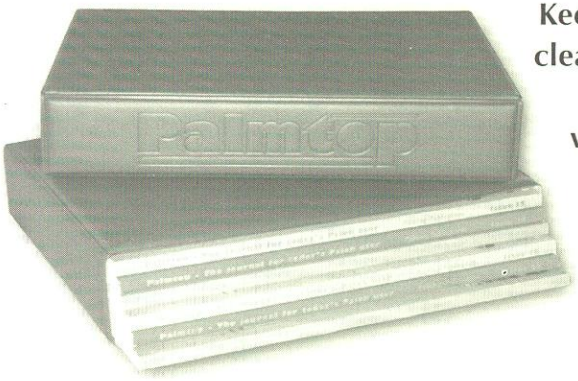

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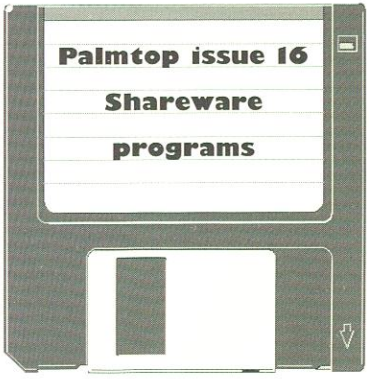

The shareware and freeware programs featured in each issue of *Palmtop* are all available—either from the major FTP sites, authors ' WWW sites, or from the major online services.

As a service for *Palmtop* readers, *3-Lib* are offering a standard 3½" PC floppy disk containing *all* the programs featured in this issue for the benefit of anyone having difficulty finding what they need.

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Available from http://members.aol.com/petesipple/kallcost.htm & usual shareware sources. Email psipple@cix.co.uk for full details

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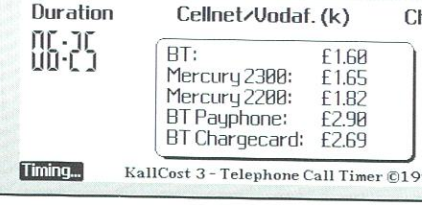

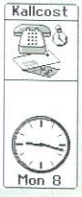

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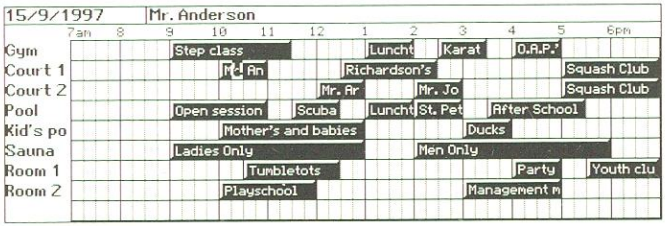
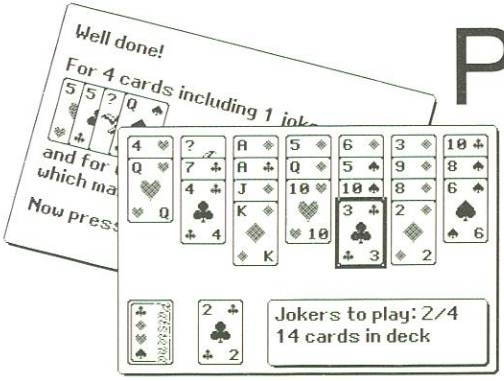
Who's in Court 1? *When is the Gym available?* *Where's the Party?*



See at a Glance with Facilities Manager

Available from *http://www.cix.co.uk/~bainb/facsman.htm* or from *3-Lib*



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Next issue...

Planned for issue 17:

- A mega-review of all the Series 5 personal finance packages (*Quicken* release permitting...)
- PsiWin 2.1 - an update on this important new upgrade
- Making the most of SKETCH on the Series 5
- Desert Island Utilities. The nine most indispensable extras for your Series 3a/3c
- Maximise your memory. We look at how keep your Series 3a/3c, Siena or Series 5 in tip-top shape
- The *complete* guide to connecting your Ericsson GS18 to the 3a/3c, Series 5 and the Geofox One
- Reviews of the Halliwell's movie guide and any other new products that appear over the coming weeks...

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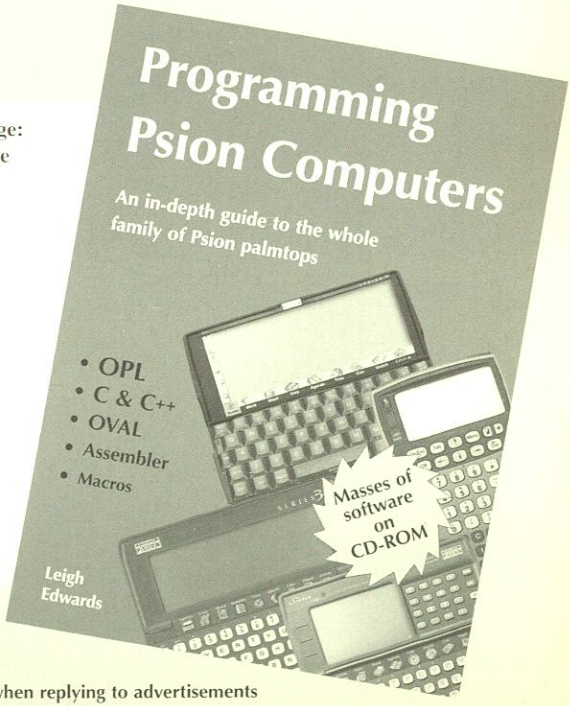

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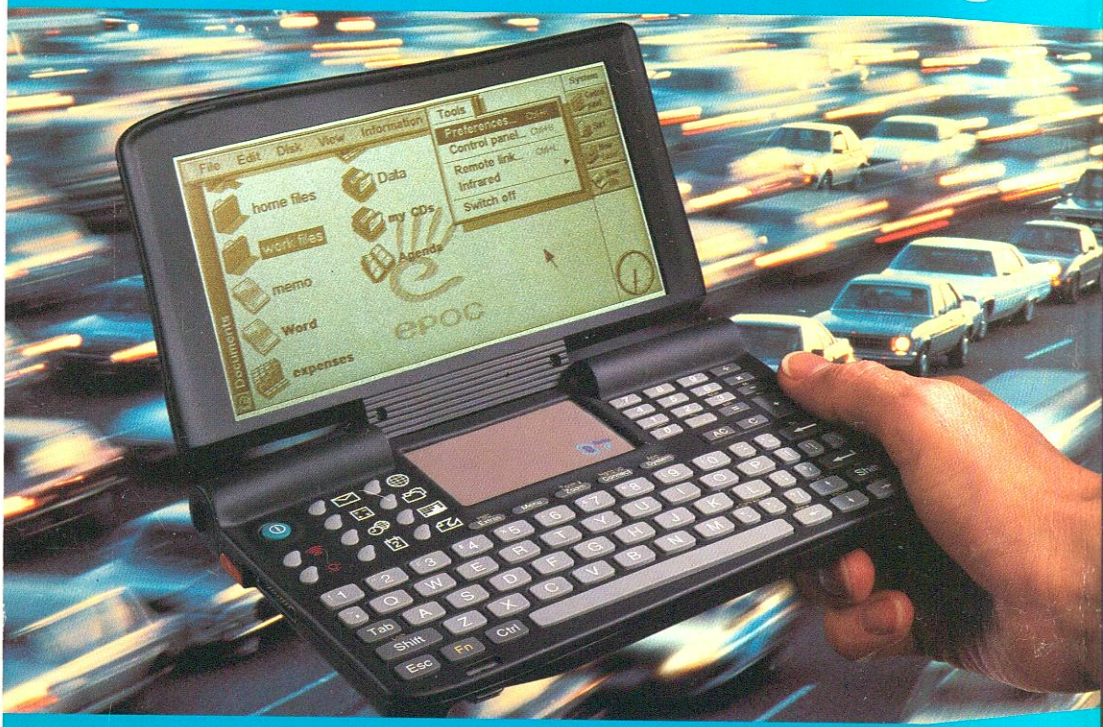

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